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AIRMEN O' WAR.

BRING HOME THE 'BUS.

BY BOYD CABLE.

*A pilot lost doesn't very much count.
(But don't tell his girl or his mater this!)
There's always another to take his mount,
And push the old 'bus where the Archies miss.
But a 'bus that's lost you can't renew,
For where one works there's the want of two,
And all they can make are still too few,
So we must bring home the 'bus.*

For ten minutes past the observer had been alternately studying his map and the ground 20,000 feet below, and now he leaned forward out of his cockpit, touched the pilot on the shoulder, and made a slight signal with his hand. Immediately the machine began to swing in a wide curve, while the observer busied himself with his camera and exposed plate after plate.

He looked up and out a moment as there came to his ear, dully but unmistakably above the roar of the engine, the hoarse 'woof' of a bursting anti-aircraft shell. The black smoke of the burst showed a good hundred yards out to their left and some hundreds of feet above them, and the observer returned to his photographing.

'Woof' came another shell, and then in quick succession another and another, the last one dead ahead and with such correct elevation that, a second later, the machine flashed through the streaming black smoke of the burst. The pilot looked back inquiringly, and the observer made a sign which meant 'Do what you please,' and sat back to wait until the pilot took such steps as he thought fit to disarrange the aim of the gunners below.

The harsh rending cough of another shell came so close beneath the machine that both men felt her distinctly jolt upward and twisting from the wind shock. The pilot waited no more. He

jammed the controls hard over and flung the machine out in a vicious side-slip, caught her at the end of it, tipped her nose over and plunged straight down with the engine full on for a thousand feet, banked sharply, pivoting fairly on his wing-tip, and shot off at right angles to his former course for a quarter of a mile; then, climbing slightly as he went, swung hard round again, dipped a little to gather speed, hoicked hard up, and in a few seconds was back somewhere about the position at which he had first departed from the course. Back about the point where they had last turned a string of black smoke-puffs flashed out rapidly. The pilot shut his engine off for an instant. 'Fooled 'em that time,' he yelled back, and grinned gleefully at his observer. The observer peered out carefully and exposed another plate, turned and passed another signal to the pilot. Instantly the engine roared out, and the machine tipped her bows down and went plunging earthward. The observer watched the needle of his height indicator drop back and back through 20,000, 19, 18, 17, 16, hang there an instant, leap up again to 16 and 17. There it stayed quivering for ten seconds, while the machine hurtled forward at a hundred miles an hour on a level keel. There the pilot dropped her nose a little again and went slanting down with the engine full on, and the needle of the speed indicator climbing up and up until the speed touched 140 miles an hour and the height indicator dropped to a 14,000-foot level. The Archie shells were spouting and splashing round them in all directions, but their erratic course had sufficiently upset the gunners to bring the bursts well out and clear, and the pilot made the last steep dizzying plunge that brought him to the 10,000-foot height his observer had asked for. But at this height they were well within the range of smaller Archie batteries, and the observer jerked the handle of his camera to and fro at intervals, with the racking cough of the shells sounding perilously close, and the reek of their burst at times swirling past as the machine tore through their smoke. Three times heavy splinters *whurred* viciously past them, and once a sharp crack and rip left a gaping black rent in the cloth of the body close astern of the observer.

For a good ten minutes the machine circled and swung and darted to and fro, while the observer hung on and snapped his plates at such objects as he wanted on the ground below; and for all that ten minutes the Archies continued to pitch a stream of shells up round, and over, and under them.

Then the observer signalled 'finished,' and the machine jerked

round and streaked off at top speed in a series of curves and zigzags that carried her westward and homeward as straight as the pilot dared drive in avoiding the shells that continued to follow them. The pilot kept her nose down a little as he went, so as to obtain the maximum speed, but when he began to run out of range of the Archies and leave their smoke bursts well astern, he tilted up and pushed straight west at top speed but on a long climb that brought him up a thousand feet a mile. Presently he felt the signal cord looped about his arm jerk and jerk again, and tilting the machine's nose slightly downward, he shut off his engine and let her glide and twisted round to the observer.

'Huns,' yelled the observer. 'Six of 'em, and coming like stink,' and he pointed up and astern to half a dozen dots in the sky.

'Would you like a scrap, Spotty?' shouted the pilot. 'Shall we take 'em on?'

'Don't ask me,' shouted Spotty. 'Ask the Hun. He'll scrap if he wants to, and you and your old 'bus can't help it, Barry.'

'Thought you knew the old "Marah" better,' retorted Barry. 'You watch'; and he twisted in his seat and opened his engine out.

Now the 'Marah' was the pride of her Squadron, and, most inordinately, of her pilot. Built line by line to the blue-print of her class, fraction by fraction of an inch in curve, straight, and stream-line, to the design of her sisters in the Squadron, differing no hair's-breadth from them in shape, size, engine, or propeller, she yet by some inscrutable decree was the best of them all in every quality that counts for best in a machine. There are theories to account for these not uncommon differences, the most popular and plausible being that the better machine is so merely because of some extra skill and minute care in her building, last touches of exactness and perfection in the finish of her parts and their assembling. The 'Marah' could outclimb anything in the Squadron with the most ridiculous ease, outclimb them in feet per minute, and in final height; she could outfly them on any level from 100 to 20,000 feet, could out-'stunt' them—although here perhaps the pilot had as much to say as the machine—in any and every stunt they cared to challenge her on. Barry, her young pilot, literally loved her. He lost no chance of trying her out against other types of machines, and there were few of the fastest and best types even amongst the single-seater scout machines that could

beat her on a level fly, or that she could not leave with her nose held slightly down. No two-seater Barry had ever met could come anywhere near the 'Marah' in stunting, in the ease and speed at which he could put her through all sorts of fancy spins, loops, side-slips, and all the rest of the bag of air tricks. How much of her superiority was due to her own qualities and how much to her pilot it is hard to say, because certain it is that Barry could climb her nearly a thousand feet higher, and drive her several knots faster, than any other pilot who had flown her.

It was because of all these things that Barry had preferred to make this particular photographing trip a lone-hand one. It was a long-distance journey far back behind the German lines, to a spot known to be well protected by long-range Archies, and of such importance that it was certain to order out fast fighting machines to cut off any flight taking back reports or photographs. Barry's arguments for his single-handed trip were simple, and, as the Squadron Commander had to admit, sound. 'One machine stands much more chance of sneaking over high up without being spotted than a whole flight,' said Barry. 'When we're there I can chuck the 'bus about any old how to dodge the Archies, while Spotty snaps his pictures; and if we're tackled by any E.A.,¹ the old "Marah" could probably outfly them by herself. And since you're so beastly positive that this isn't a scrapping stunt, I'd sooner be on my own and free to dodge and run and use clouds and so on without having to think of keeping formation. Don't you worry. We'll come through all right.'

The Squadron Commander gave in. 'Right oh,' he said reluctantly. 'And do keep your eyes skinned for Huns and run from 'em if you've a chance. This information is wanted badly remember, and you mustn't risk getting scuppered with it. And besides, we can't afford to lose the "Marah" out of the Squadron. You don't count of course, but the old 'bus is too good to lose.'

He hid a good deal of anxiety under his chaffing, and Barry, reading that and the friendship that bred it, laughed and took the same light-hearted tone. 'You won't lose her,' he said. 'If a Hun punctures me and Spotty, we'll just jump overboard and tell the old girl to push along home on her own. She's jolly near got sense enough to do it too, I believe.'

Now all this was in Barry's mind when Spotty told him of the pursuing enemy, and so he set himself to take every ounce of

¹ E.A. = Enemy Aircraft.

advantage he could. The machines behind were travelling faster, because they had sighted him from a much higher level, and had all the additional speed that a downward slant gave them, while the 'Marah,' still held on a slightly upward incline, lost something of her top speed thereby. Barry knew there were Archie batteries to be passed over on the way back, and if he meant to keep a straight course it was necessary that he should be as far above them as possible. He leaned out and peered down at the landscape wheeling and unrolling under them, picked out the spot he was watching for—a village where he knew Archie batteries were located—and altered course slightly to give it a wider berth. In another minute the Archie shells began to bark about them. At the first one that came dangerously close the 'Marah' hoicked abruptly upward five hundred feet, wheeled sharp south for half a mile, swung again and drove straight west. Twice she had to swerve and dodge in similar fashion before she cleared the zone of the Archie's range, and these swerves and their faster downward passage allowed the enemy craft to overhaul her considerably. Spotty swung his machine-gun round in readiness and trained it aft and up on the hostiles. Two single-seaters were half a mile ahead of the other four and looming larger every minute. They were within long range now and, presently, one of them loosed off a dozen rounds or so at the 'Marah.' Spotty jerked a signal that he was going to fire, and taking careful sight rapped off about twenty rounds. The range was too great yet for him, and the Huns made no sign of a swerve from their direct path, so Spotty ceased firing and waited, glancing over his sights at one machine that had forged slightly ahead of the other. Barry looked back over his shoulder and up at the two machines. They were still a good thousand feet above the 'Marah,' but Barry was satisfied enough with the way the game was running, because while they had dropped from perhaps 20,000 feet to 15,000, the 'Marah' had gained three to four thousand as she flew. The advantage of height was half the battle, and Barry wanted to snatch every inch of it he could gain. For that reason he passed a signal back to Spotty to open fire again, and Spotty obediently began to rip out a series of short bursts. The two men had flown so long together that each knew the other's dodges and ideas to an extent precious beyond words, and had a code of brief signals in head-noddings and jerkings and hand motions that saved much waste of time and breath in shutting off engine to shout messages or

yelling through the communicating 'phone. Spotty figured now just the plan Barry had in mind, a plan to hustle the enemy into making his attempt before he was at the closest effective range for a diving attack. The plan succeeded too. His bullets must have been going somewhere close, for Spotty saw the nearest machine swerve ever so slightly, as if her pilot had flinched or ducked instinctively. Then Spotty saw her nose dip slightly until it was pointed straight at the 'Marah,' the machine-gun firing through her propeller broke out in a long rapid burst of fire, and the bullets came flashing and streaming past in thin pencils of flame and smoke. What followed takes a good deal longer in the telling than it did in the happening. All three machines were travelling, remember, at a speed of anything round a hundred knots, a speed that rose at times as they dipped and dived to nearer perhaps a hundred and thirty and forty. While they were flying on the same course with little difference in speed each airman could see the other closely and in detail, could watch each little movement, look over at leisure small items about each other's machines. Mere groundlings cannot get nearer to the sensation than to imagine or remember sitting at the window of a carriage on the slow lumbering sixty-mile-an-hour express watching the almost equally slow mail rushing over the rails at sixty-five miles on a parallel line, and seeing the passengers at her windows scanning deliberately the shape of your hat or colour of your hair.

In just such fashion Spotty saw the pilot of the leading machine rise slightly and glance astern at his companion, saw him settle himself in his seat, saw him raise a hand and motion downward. Instantly he jerked the cord fast to Barry's shoulder, signalling 'look out,' and with swift clockwork motions snatched the almost empty drum off his machine-gun, and replaced it with the full one he held ready clutched between his knees. Vaguely in the swift ensuing seconds he felt the machine under him sway and leap and reel; but his whole mind was for that time concentrated on his gun sights, on keeping them full on the bulk of the machine astern of him, in pressing the trigger at the exact critical second. He saw the round bow of his nearest pursuer lift and for one long breath saw the narrow tapering length of her underbody behind it. That was a chance, and he filled it full and brimming with a fifty-round burst of which he saw the bullets flash and disappear in the fuselage above him. Then in a flash the underbody disappeared, and the rounded bow of the hostile came plunging down on him, growing

and widening as it came full power and speed of engine and gravity pull. He was dimly conscious of her firing as she came, and he kept his own gun going, pumping bullets in a constant stream, his eye glued to the sights, his finger clenched about the trigger. Somehow he knew—just knew, without reasoning or thinking it out—that his bullets were going to their mark, and it gave him no slightest touch of astonishment when he saw his enemy stagger, leap upward, lurch and roll until she stood straight up on her wing-tip, and so, banking and deflecting from the 'Marah's' course, flash in a split fraction of a second out of the fight. He had no more than a glimpse of a gust of fire and gush of black smoke from somewhere about her before she vanished from his sight, and he was training his sights on a second shape that came swooping and plunging down upon him. This second enemy made better play with her gun. With deadly slowness and persistence, as it seemed, she closed, yard by yard. Spotty trained his gun full in the centre of the quivering light rays that marked the circle of her whirling propeller, and poured burst after burst straight at the jerking flashes of the machine-gun that blazed through her propeller. He felt an agonising jar on his ankle . . . but the drum of his machine-gun snapped out its last cartridge, and Spotty smoothly and methodically whipped off the empty drum, stooped and lifted a full one, fitted it in place, and looking over his sights rapped his gun into action again; while all the time the bullets of his adversary hailed and ripped and tore about and upon the 'Marah,' riddling the rudder, slashing along the stern, cracking in the whiplike reports of explosive bullets about the observer's cockpit, lifting forward and rap-rap-rapping about the bows and the pilot's stooped head. The 'Marah' leaped out suddenly and at full stride in a hundred foot sideslip, checked, and hurtled upward; and in that breath of time the pursuer flicked past and down and hurtled out of the vision of Spotty's sights. It was all over so quickly that Spotty, looking overside, could see still the first enemy spinning down jerkily with black smoke whirling up from her fuselage, spinning helplessly down, as he knew, to hit the earth fifteen thousand feet below. Spotty felt suddenly and surprisingly sick and faint. His particular story blurs somewhat from here on because he himself was never able to supply it in detail. He was able to answer Barry—Barry turning to shout his question while the 'Marah' tore along at her full hundred and ten knots—that he'd been hit somewhere about the foot or leg, and didn't feel much,

except sick. This Barry was able to gather with some difficulty, after juggling with the wheel beside him that shifted angles of incidence and more or less stabilised the 'Marah's' flight, abandoning his controlling 'joy-stick,' clambering up on his seat, and hanging back and over to bring his head into the observer's cockpit and his ear within reach of Spotty's feeble attempts at a shout. While he attempted to carry on his laboured inquiries, the 'Marah,' her engine throttled down and her controls left to look after themselves, swooped gently and leisurely, slid downwards on a gliding slant for a thousand feet, pancaked into an air-pocket, and fell off into a spinning dive. While she plunged earthward at a rate of some hundred feet per second Barry finished his inquiries, dragged or pushed back into his seat—it was really down into his seat, since the 'Marah' at the moment was standing on her head and his seat was between the observer's and the bows, but the wind pressure at that speed made it hard work to slide down—took hold of his controls, waited the exact and correct moment, flattened the 'Marah' out of her spin, opened the throttle and went booming off again to westward a bare five thousand feet above ground level. He had, it is true, a moment's parley and a swift summing up of the situation before he turned the 'Marah's' bows definitely for home. And the situation was ugly enough to be worth considering. Spotty (Barry thought of him first) was in a bad way—leg smashed to flinders—explosive evidently—bleeding like a stuck pig (wonder would the plates be spoiled, or was the camera built water-tight, or blood-tight?)—very doubtful if he'd last out the journey home. Then Barry himself had wounds—the calf of his left leg blown to shreds, and the toes of his left foot gone, and, most upsettingly painful of all, a gaping hole where his left eye should be, a blood-streaming agony that set his senses reeling and wavering and clearing slowly and painfully. This last wound, as it proved, was the result of a ricocheting bullet which, flicking forward as Barry had turned his head, cut his left eye clean from its socket. The summing up was very clear and simple. They were a good thirty miles from the lines; Spotty might easily bleed to death in less than that; he, Barry, might do the same, or might faint from pain and exhaustion. In that case done-finish himself, and Spotty, and the 'Marah,' in a drop of five thousand feet and a full hundred-mile-an-hour crash below. On the other hand, he had only to move his hand, push the joy-stick out and sweep the 'Marah' down, flatten her out and pick a decent field, land, and he and Spotty would

be in the doctor's hands in a matter of minutes, both of them safe and certain of their lives at least. In ten seconds they could be on the floor and in safety—and in German hands . . . the two of them and . . . and . . . the 'Marah.' It was probably the thought of the 'Marah' that turned the scale, if ever the scale really hung in doubt. 'We can't afford . . . '—what was it the Squadron Commander had said?—'Can't afford to lose the old "Marah" from the Squadron.' No (Barry's vision cleared mentally and physically at the thought),—No, and by the Lord, the Squadron wasn't going to lose the 'Marah,' not if it was in him to bring the old 'bus home.

He knew it was going to be a close thing, for himself and for the 'Marah'; and carefully he set himself to take the last and least ounce of the chances in favour of his getting the 'Marah' across the line. It would be safer to climb high and cross the fire of the Archies that waited him on the line; safer so far as dodging the shells went, but cutting down the limit set to his strength and endurance by the passing minutes. On the level, or with her nose a little down, the 'Marah' would make the most of the time left her, or rather left him. His senses blurred and swam again; he felt himself lurching forward in his seat, knew that this was pushing the joy-stick forward and the 'Marah's' nose to earth, shoved himself back in his seat and clutched the stick desperately to him . . . and woke slowly a minute after to find the 'Marah's' bows pointed almost straight up, her engine struggling to lift her, his machine on the very verge of stalling and falling back into the gulf. He flung her nose down and forward hastily, and the 'Marah' ducked gracefully over like a hunter taking an easy fence, steadied and lunged forward in arrow-straight flight. After that Barry concentrated on the faces of the clock, the height and the speed indicators. Once or twice he tried to look overside to locate his position, but the tearing hurricane wind of the 'Marah's' passage so savaged his torn face and eye that he was forced back into the cover of his windscreen. Five minutes went. Over, well over a hundred the speed indicator said the 'Marah' was doing. Nearly five thousand up the height indicator said (must have climbed a lump in that minute's haziness, concluded Barry), and, reckoning to cross the line somewhere inside the five hundred up—which after all would risk machine-gun and rifle fire but spare them the Archies—would allow him to slant the 'Marah' down a trifle and get a little more speed out of her. He tilted her carefully and watched the speed indicator

climb slowly and hang steady. And so another five minutes went. Two thousand up said the indicator; and 'woof, woof, woof' grunted a string of Archie shells. 'Getting near the line,' said Barry, and pushed the joy-stick steadily forward. The 'Marah' hurtled downward on a forty-five degree slant, her engine full out, the wind screaming and shrieking about her. Fifteen hundred, a thousand, five hundred pointed the needle of the height indicator, and slowly and carefully Barry pulled the 'Marah's' head up and held her racing at her top speed on the level. Fifteen minutes gone. They must be near the lines now. He could catch, faint and far off through the booming roar of his engine, the rattle of rifle fire, and a faint surprise took him at the sound of two strange raps, and the sight of two neat little round holes in the instrument board and map in front of him. He looked out, carefully holding the joy-stick steady in one hand and covering his torn eye with the other, and saw the wriggling lines of white trenches flashing past close below. Then from the cockpit behind him broke out a steady clatter and jar of the observer's machine-gun. Barry looked round to see Spotty, chalk-faced and tight-lipped, leaning over the side with arms thrust out and pointing his gun straight to earth with a stream of flashes pouring from the muzzle. 'Good man,' murmured Barry, 'oh, good man,' and made the 'Marah' wriggle in her flight as a signal. Spotty looked round, loosened his lips in a ghastly grin, and waved an arm signalling to turn at right angles. 'Nothin' doin', my son,' said Barry grinning back. 'It's "Home, John" for us this time. But fancy the priceless old fellow wanting to go touring their front line spraying lead on 'em. Good lad, Spotty.'

A minute later he felt his senses reel and his sight blacken again, but he gripped his teeth on his lip and steered for the clump of wood that hid his own Squadron's landing ground.

He made his landing there too; made it a trifle badly, because when he came to put rudder on he found that his left leg refused its proper work. And so he crashed at the last, crashed very mildly it is true, but enough to skew the wheels and twist the frame of the under-carriage a little. And as Spotty's first words when he was lifted from his cockpit were of the crash—'Barry, you blighter, if you've crashed those plates of mine I'll never forgive you. . . . You'll find all the plates exposed, Major, and notes of the bearing and observations in my pocket-book'—so also were Barry's last of the same thing. He didn't speak till near the

end. Then he opened his one eye to the Squadron Commander waiting at his bedside and made an apology . . . ('An apology . . . Good Lord ! . . .' as the Major said after). 'Did I crash her badly, Major?' And when the Major assured him No, nothing that wouldn't repair in a day and that the 'Marah' would be ready for him when he came back to them, he shook his head faintly. 'But it doesn't matter,' he said. 'Anyhow I got her home. . . . And if I'm going West the old "Marah" will go East again . . . and get some more Huns for you.' He ceased, and was silent a minute. Then 'I'm sorry I crashed her, Major . . . but y'see, . . . my leg was a bit numb.'

He closed his eye; and died.

Note.—Lest any of my readers should fancy they can make definite identifications in 'Airmen o' War,' let me say on behalf of Boyd Cable that all his names and characters in this new series are fictitious.—[ED. CORNHILL].

NEUTRALITY.

'Twas easy to distinguish bad from good
 When prophets were among us, taking notes :
 Ranged on that side the Sheep in order stood,
 On this the Goats.

On just and unjust (quite distinct as yet)
 The rain descended with impartial spite :
 No neutral tints were ever in the wet—
 Just black and white.

And Then some wretched Imp came prowling round—
 Let History decide precisely When—
 To those dim precincts where the Fates compound
 The souls of men :

And there the Virtues lay, in glass and jar,
 Some little in demand, and others much ;
 And there the Vices, culled from near and far,
 And marked 'Don't Touch.'

He mixed them up ; and now we do not know
 Who's Who (in point of ethics) or What's What :
 Whether our feet are on the Higher Way,
 Or going to Pot.

Our saints the authentic halo do not show
 Of those who keep the Perfect Decalogue ;
 Our most successful prodigals don't go
 Quite the whole hog.

Where is the Wheat we knew, and where the Tares—
 Symbols of moral and immoral growth ?
 A curious hybrid flourishes, and wears
 A look of both.

The Angel whose vocation is to write

The tale of how we triumphed, how we tripped,
(With all that lies between) in the polite
Seraphic script,

Must, as he views his ledger's acreage,

Sigh to reflect that once, in ages gone,
He managed with two columns to his page—
Just pro and con.

ROBERT BELL.

THE LIBERATED VILLAGES OF FRANCE.

BETWEEN the pleasant towns of Compiègne and Coucy-le-Château there is a group of villages and small towns which, in the spring of this year, were liberated from German domination by the French Army. As an example of what liberation from the Germans may mean, these villages and towns are but moderate examples, for, although most of them are in ruins and the inhabitants either taken away to Germany or forced to be exiled to other parts of France, there is a possibility that out of the *débris* reconstruction can be begun, whereas in districts where possession of the towns has been fiercely contested for years, not so much as a brick remains, and the character of the soil in the surrounding country is entirely changed by the uninterrupted storm of shells from enemy and allied artillery.

Compiègne itself still carries marks of the war in its temporary bridges over the river and in ruined buildings, for the town was under bombardment many months after the Germans retreated in the battle of the Marne. The Château was not touched, as the Emperor William hoped to preserve it for a royal shooting-box, and his officers, before leaving, folded their dinner napkins with the remark that they would need them again. Happily they were wrong, and the Château now serves as a Headquarters for the French Army; and the spirit of the great Napoleon may return in peace when the light on the beautiful 'Place' grows violet before deepening into the velvety darkness of night.

For two years and a half Compiègne has been on the very edge of the fighting-line, as it was only in March of this year that Noyon, twenty miles away, Ham, Guiscard, and Chauny, with a group of smaller villages, were retaken by the French troops. The liberation of these places was an emotional and difficult moment for the authorities, military and civil: there was much to be done, and as the troops poured into the villages the civilians were obliged to pour out, there being no means of continuing civil life among the ruins. Most of them passed through Compiègne, a sad and bewildered company of people. Old women bent double, parentless children who could tell nothing of themselves except to say that father and mother had gone to Germany. No young or early-middle-aged people were to be found among them at all. They had all been underfed for two years and a half, and they had been

told that their army was beaten, their active troops destroyed, and only the territorials left to defend the country. The picture that had been before their eyes for long months was a depressing one: a conquered France with a starving population. Such was the mental nourishment dealt out to them during the German occupation, and their physical food was not any less depressing. Rice, very bad bread, and very little meat. They were not actually ill-treated, and the good opinion of the younger women was undoubtedly courted. Many withstood all allurements with heroic patriotism. Some were persuaded to a less difficult solution of daily problems. The old men and women who remembered the 1870 war suffered very keenly, and not a few have died of what in old-fashioned phrase would have been called a broken heart. To see the Germans twice victorious, although but temporarily, was bitter indeed to these old people, and when they were forced to give up first their sons and grandsons to fight, then their daughters and granddaughters into captivity, and, finally, to see all their material possessions pillaged and burned, they felt that life held nothing more for them and they left it or they still hang on by a slender thread, with the sad conviction that they must remain homeless and be beggars until the end. One old man of seventy who came from Ham told his story with a quiet simplicity which was infinitely tragic and all too common. He was a rich man when the war came, the owner of a large farm, prosperous and well stocked. Now he has just 40*l.* in the world. His house has been burned, his horses, his cattle, his grain have been stolen, and he, himself, is a refugee receiving 1 fr. 75 cts. a day from the Government. '*Je vais traîner la misère jusqu'à la mort*' is his mournful conviction, and it is hard to contradict him, for at seventy the sands of life run low.

To see these people surrounded by the ruins of their homes is intensely painful, and as you pass from one village to another, each one a more hopeless mass of ruins than the other, it is impossible not to ask oneself whether the work of reconstruction will ever be carried through, or whether the people will not turn their backs on it and begin again in some new land free from haunting memories and constant reminders of all that used to be. But no, that is not the character of the French provincial men and women. Their one aim and desire is to return to their old life. Some of them have been sent south, others to Brittany, La Vendée, others yet to the centre of France; but no matter where they go they long

to be back home with all the music of familiar things about them. For it must be remembered that the French peasants fix their first boundary line of patriotism at the extremity of their native village, the wider one of France being much less clearly defined in their minds.

Especially is this spirit to be found in the farmers, a fine stubborn race in most countries and particularly so in France, where the land is such a living thing to the people who work it. Over and over again you hear men and women between the ages of fifty and sixty say that they are quite ready to begin their life's work once more, and all they ask is that they may get the necessary material aid as quickly as possible so that no time may be wasted. They look at the ruins and they study the land, and before they move a brick towards rebuilding the house, they till the fields and plant the garden which is to supply the vegetables for the 'pot-au-feu.' You come across a neat little patch of ground in the midst of a perfect desolation of ruined houses, and side by side with barbed wire and dug-outs are fields of corn and roots.

There are villages from which the very birds have flown, and where no sign of human life is to be found at all: only pathetic reminders that once man had made for himself there a homely habitation: the skeleton of a villa stands behind some ornamental railings, and among the heaps of masonry is the gay plumage of a parrot and bits of a child's rocking-horse. 'Voyez vous!' says a soldier: 'That was my house. I spent all my savings to build it, *un bien joli* villa. My wife wrote and told me that *They* had burned it to the ground, but somehow I did not believe it was as bad as that.' Upon which he shrugged his shoulders and turned away. And his story is the story of thousands: some had great possessions, others but a plot of ground and a two-roomed cottage. The Germans have destroyed them all.

At Noyon, which may stand as a centre of this particular part of liberated France, the destruction of the houses has been comparatively small, and the little city stands fair and smiling in the summer landscape still. It was the birthplace of St. Médard, the French St. Swithin, and it boasts a cathedral of some architectural beauty, a Renaissance bishopric, a Gothic and Renaissance town hall, and the house in which Calvin was born.

None of these historic buildings has been touched, although the church was said to be mined and for many weeks it was not opened to the public. The houses have also been stripped of

their treasures in art and furniture, and where it has been impossible to carry things away to Germany, the soldiers have wilfully damaged and broken what they have had to leave behind. Doors have been wrenched from the wardrobes, drawers in chests have been broken in pieces, and a general destruction of minor objects has gone on systematically, here as elsewhere. One old woman, whose sewing-machine was not only her means of livelihood, but her most cherished possession, had it wrecked before her eyes, simply because it was known to be what she valued most. Such is the cynicism with which the German military mind is stained.

At Chauny, a small town about fifteen miles from Noyon, hardly a house remains standing, and the Mayor, who stood as buffer between the German military authorities and the French civilians for over two years, bears impressive witness to the subtle tyranny of the enemy during the whole time. As so often was the case, the brutal behaviour practised in Belgium was not general, but what went on with methodical precision was the propaganda against France. The inhabitants were persistently told that France was beaten, and to emphasise their own power, coming events were given dates and the plan carried out to the letter and the hour: 'We are going to retire for strategical reasons on such a date'—and they did it. 'We shall feed you until such a date and after that you will rely on your own people'—it was done as they said it would be. And always it was the same. The Mayor's voice was painfully solemn when he spoke of their organisation, and he shook his head sadly when an officer cheerfully said that it was France's turn now. It is not that he doubts his own people, but that he fears the power of the enemy yet, and he knows how hard the whole German army has worked to poison the minds of the ignorant peasants of France. When asked how many civilians went with the German army when it retreated, he said 7800, leaving behind only 1800. 'But,' he added, 'I must tell you that many of these went of their own free will, for they had been told, and believed, that if they remained with their own people they would starve.' It was this same propaganda which caused an old woman, as she watched the French troops come into Chauny, to say: 'What a lot of young French soldiers! They told us they were all killed!'

In another village, now but a heap of stones and dust, the Bavarians worked hard to win the friendship of the civilians, but their profound cynicism showed itself even in the places where

they were the least objectionable. They made love to the women, and at the same time boasted that they had protected their own dead by burying them side by side with Frenchmen. They showed a certain humanity in sheltering the inhabitants from unjust punishments, and immediately afterwards robbed the very people they had been defending. As an instance of this extraordinary mentality, there is a story of some civilians being fined and punished for having fired two toy guns with the intention of signalling to the French lines. They were ordered to pay 1000 frs. and to sleep in the church for a month. Before the month was up two German soldiers, who had been on leave, came back and confessed to having fired the guns themselves, with the result that the punishment was repealed and the 1000 fr. were returned to their owner, the curé. But the last act of the play was not any better than the first, for no sooner had the soldiers delivered the civilians from the punishment laid on them by their officers than they organised a raid themselves on the curé's house to get the 1000 fr. note and anything else they found to be worth while. So thoroughly did they do their work that the curé found his death, and the village was the poorer of many things that have a higher price than gold.

A further proof of German cynicism, and one that is general, is the way the troops have cut down or poisoned the fruit trees. In this district alone the number is 32,000, of which only 100 have, so far, been regrafted. You see them lying where they fell, neatly and systematically cut off about a foot and a half from the ground, or they still stand, mercilessly hacked about the trunks that they must die later. Always a fallen tree is impressive, but to see them in thousands, cut down or killed for no purpose but that of ill-will, makes men bitterly angry, and it is said that when the French soldiers saw the orchards wrecked so mercilessly, they vowed to do the same in Germany later on. It was probably in an access of rage for something like this that they themselves wrecked a German cemetery set in the most peaceful of forest glades. The graveyard was divided into two parts—one for officers, one for men. To the officers' memory elaborate monuments had been put up—simple black crosses marked the graves of the men. The French soldiers have overturned the monuments, but they have not touched the black wooden crosses, neither have they desecrated the graves, whereas a letter from an English officer to his people tells of his anger when he found, on entering a liberated village, that everything French had been burnt, and even the cemetery had been

desecrated, while the German graveyard stood intact, and a model of reverent tidiness. It is this fulsome cynicism that so enrages men's hearts in visiting the devastated districts, this petty proof of an egoism so profound that even death brings them no nearer to seeing the other man's point of view.

The devastation which has been wrought by the Germans in the north of France is so much more than material, that it is impossible to say what will be the effect after the war. For the moment, the clear call is for material help, and that should be given as quickly and as wisely as possible, whether it comes from outside the country or within. The main object of all lovers of France should be to build up village life with all possible speed, for the villages mean agricultural France, and it is to agricultural France that we must look for the future men and women who are to make the new France. To help the farmers of all degrees is the first thing. Temporarily, they are discouraged, but the call of the land is deep-rooted in their hearts and will prove stronger than all the German propaganda in the world. They have, in the meantime, been widely scattered over the country and count themselves in exile, for France to the French peasant is really his native village. The village church, the village accent, all that speaks of his childhood—that is what the Frenchman is fighting for, and that is just what the German has tried to destroy. Where he has failed with the men, he has tried to succeed with the women, and it is part of his lesson to say to them: 'We like France, and we like Frenchwomen—but Frenchmen are done for.' He has penetrated into the most exclusive homes in Europe and either by force or persuasion he has tried to turn away the allegiance of Frenchwomen from their country and their families. In this as in other things he has failed, and when those in exile are recalled to their villages they will come gladly, even though nothing remains of their 'clochers' and their homes are but dust and ashes. Out of them—with the old spirit and more virile than ever—they will build new churches, new houses, new families, and a stronger, because a broader, patriotism.

It is probable, too, that they will build up a new religion, based on the old creed, but purified. Led by their priests who have fought in the trenches, who have remained bravely at their posts in the occupied villages, or have suffered persecution in Germany, they will return to a simpler faith, from which they may hope to draw, not only consolation in sorrowful hours, but guidance in hours of

gladness. They have seen of what fine metal many of these village priests are made, and they will not forget. There is one of them, the curé of a village near Noyon, who from being a prisoner in Germany, carries on his body seventeen bayonet wounds, has been court-martialled four times, and condemned to death twice. But his spirit was unbreakable, and literally 'sick unto death,' he has been sent home, where he is again working for his people, with no church in which to celebrate Mass, or to hear confessions, and with only a remnant of his congregation left for him to minister to. Many have fallen on the battlefield, others are still fighting, and, sadder still, the youths and maidens have been carried away into exile by the enemy. Only the very young or the very old remain, it is on them that must fall the task of carrying on until happier days

Another story illustrative of the unconquerable spirit of the French race is that of a widow, with four children and a grown-up son with the army, who owned a small shop in Ham. The Germans took everything that was in it, and also rifled the cellars, finding in the corner of one all her life's savings: 800*l*. These they took too, and she was eventually evacuated to Paris with four barefooted, half-starved children, forced to accept the State grant for refugees, and to seek work in an unknown city; for Paris, although the Mecca of the young and the ambitious, is by no means a paradise to the provincial Frenchwoman of peasant origin. To such as these it is almost a foreign city, where they suffer from home-sickness as badly as though they were in exile. Yet it is difficult for them to remain among the ruins of their homes, and, although the French Government leaves them free to say if they will stay or go, circumstances often compel where the law does not. There are also villages which are out of the line of German occupation, and which have never been under German rule, yet have suffered from a complete cessation of work for two years and more because of their nearness to the battlefields. In these villages the distress is often very pitiable. The inhabitants get no Government help and the Relief Committees sweep past them unheeding because unknowing. Fortunately, the military and civil authorities are beginning to realise the necessity of reaching out a helping hand to such places, and with the many organisations which are growing up under their hands through the combined efforts of France, Great Britain, and America, it is hoped to help them to recover their old vitality.

Great supplies of material are being sent up to the devastated lands wherever they are wanted; and although in the first days a certain amount of overlapping in the common effort to help was noticeable, the relief work is very rapidly settling down to be effectively and permanently reconstructive. Already villages are being rebuilt by American architects with American money, and the British army is tilling the ground it liberates as quickly as it can, using for the purpose the machines and tools which were brought from Germany by the Kaiser's orders for that same purpose. Unhappily, there is much ground that will not be fit for cultivation for some years, except as forest land, as it has been so turned over by shells that the fertile loam is now overpowered by a chalk subsoil. It is in places such as these that the question of the reconstruction of village life is so great a problem, and although France's Allies may help her materially to an almost unlimited degree, it is only France who can decide how that help shall be used; even as it is only France which can give back to the peasants of the invaded districts that unbounded confidence in the strength of the nation upon which their patriotism has been ever built, and for this purpose the French Government is encouraging a systematic propaganda all over France, but particularly in the villages where ignorance of the real reasons for fighting German militarism is still profound. It is these village people who have given most in the war, and as they look at the wreck of their lives all round them they inevitably ask 'Why?' Unconsciously they have lived up to the old French device while the country is at war: 'Travaillons ou Combattons'; but it is now necessary that they should be given a fuller knowledge of the reasons for going on. Propagandists for a German peace have been busy in all these by-ways, and Frenchmen who know their people well consider that it is now the moment for a vigorous patriotic campaign to fight those subtle enemy doctrines which have been sown throughout the land, both in the war zone and out of it.

The task is a great one, for it means much more than a series of lectures on the general situation, no matter how well done. It means practical help, both public and private, a union of interests, and a common sacrifice. Out of the ruined houses and from the scarred fields a new France has to be rebuilt. On the site of the destroyed churches a new House of Prayer must be erected, for it is also from the French villages that the finest material of the French army is recruited, and it is from the French villages that

the great towns of France are fed. It will not be enough to give back to the ruined inhabitants their houses and their fields, and the strictly necessary means with which to begin life again ; they will need much more than that if they are to be true to their war device of 'work or fight.' It will not be enough for the rulers of France to let the 'law of their country be the *non ultra* of their honesty.' But they must learn to 'joyn Gospel Righteousness to Legal Right,' and then, and then only, they will be able to give back to French village life its indescribable flavour of wholesome simplicity, a flavour which is the true essence of the old French life, no matter whether of cottage or château. Without it, France ceases to be France, and it is to destroy just that flavour that the German propagandists have been working before the war, and during it, thus trying to complete fatally that material destruction which they know would otherwise be but a momentary stumbling-block to the life of the nation.

THE CRUISE OF THE 'GLASGOW.'

BY BENNET COPPLESTONE.

PART II.—CORONEL TO JUAN FERNANDEZ
(Nov. 1, 1914, to March 14, 1915).

WE left the British cruiser *Glasgow* off the River Plate, where she had arrived after her escape, sore at heart and battered in body, from the disaster of Coronel. The battleship *Canopus* remained behind at Port Stanley to defend the newly established coaling-station at the Falkland Islands. Her four 12-inch guns would have made the inner harbour impassable to the lightly armoured cruisers of Admiral von Spee had he descended before the reinforcements from the north arrived; and the colliers, cleverly hidden in the remote creeks of the Islands, would have been most difficult for him to discover. It was essential to our plans that there should be ample stores of coal at the Falklands for the use of Sturdee's punitive squadron when it should arrive, and every possible precaution was taken to ensure the supply. As it happened, von Spee did not come for five weeks. He was at his wits' end to find coal, and was, moreover, short of ammunition after the bombardment of Tahiti and the big expenditure in the Coronel fight. So he remained pottering about off the Chilian coast until he had swept up enough of coal and of colliers to make his journey to the Falklands, and to provide for his return to the Lair which he had established in an inlet upon the coast.

At the English Bank, off the River Plate, the *Glasgow* had joined up with the *Carnarvon*, *Defence*, and *Cornwall*, and her company were greatly refreshed in spirit by the kindly understanding and sympathy of their brothers of the sea. The officers and men of the *Glasgow*, who had by now worked together for more than two years, had come through their shattering experiences with extraordinary little loss of moral. They had suffered a material defeat, but their courage and confidence in the ultimate issue burned as brightly as ever. Even upon the night of the disaster, when they were seeking a safe road to the Straits, uncertain whether the Germans would arrive there first, they were much more concerned for the safety of the *Canopus* than worried about their own skins. Their captain and navigating lieutenant had thrust upon them difficulties and

anxieties of which the others were at first ignorant. The ship's compasses were found to be gravely disturbed by the shocks of the action, their magnetism had been upset, and not until star sights could be taken were they able to correct the error of fully twenty degrees. The speed at which the cruiser travelled buried the stern deeply, and the water entering by the big hole blown in the port quarter threatened to flood a whole compartment and make it impossible for full speed to be maintained. The voyage to the Straits was, for those responsible, a period of grave anxiety. Yet through it all the officers and men did their work and maintained a cheerful countenance, as if to pass almost scatheless through a tremendoustorrent of shell, and to get away with waggling compasses and a great hole between wind and water, was an experience which custom had made of little moment. No one could have judged from their demeanour that never before November 1 had the *Glasgow* been in action, and that not until November 6, when she had beside her the support of the *Canopus's* great guns, did she reach comparative safety.

The *Glasgow's* damaged side had been shored up internally with baulks of timber, but if she were to become sea- and battle-worthy it was necessary to seek for some more permanent means of repair. So with her consorts she made for Rio, arriving on the 16th, and reported her damaged condition to the Brazilian authorities. Under the Hague Convention she was entitled to remain at Rio for a sufficient time to be made seaworthy, and the Brazilian Government interpreted the Convention in the most generous sense. The Government floating dock was placed at her disposal, and here for five days she was repaired, until with her torn side plating entirely renewed she was as fit as ever for the perils of the sea. Her engineers took the fullest advantage of those invaluable days; they overhauled the boilers and engines so thoroughly that when the bold cruiser emerged from Rio she was fresh and clean, ready to steam at her old full speed of some twenty-six knots, and to fight anything with which she could reasonably be classed in weight of metal. By this time the *Glasgow* had learned of the great secret concentration about to take place at her old Pirates' Lair to the north, and of those other concentrations which were designed to ensure the destruction of von Spee to whatsoever part of the wide oceans he might direct his ships.

The disaster of Coronel had set the Admiralty bustling to very good and thorough purpose. No fewer than five squadrons were

directed to concentrate for the one purpose of ridding the seas of the German cruisers. First came down Sturdee with the battle cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible* to join the *Carnarvon*, *Glasgow*, *Kent*, *Cornwall*, and *Bristol* at the Pirates' Lair. Upon their arrival the armoured cruiser *Defence* was ordered to the Cape to complete there a watching squadron ready for von Spee should he seek safety in that direction. One Japanese squadron remained to guard the China seas, and another of great power sped across the Pacific towards the Chilian coast. In Australian waters were the battle cruiser *Australia* and her consorts of the Unit, together with the French cruiser *Montcalm*. Von Spee's end was certain; what was not quite so certain was whether he would fall to the Japanese or to Sturdee. Our Japanese Allies fully understood that we were gratified at his falling to us; he had sunk our ships and was our just prey. Yet if he had loitered much longer off Chili, and had not at last ventured upon his fatal Falklands dash, the gallant Japanese would have had him. Luck favoured us now, as it had favoured us a month earlier when the *Emden* was destroyed at the Cocos-Keeling Islands. Those who have read my story of the *Emden* in the December issue of this magazine will remember that but for the fortune of position which placed the *Sydney* nearest to the Islands when their wireless call for help went out, the famous raider would in all probability have fallen to a Japanese light cruiser which was with the Australian convoy.

The mission of the *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, and the secrecy with which it was enshrouded, is one of the most romantic episodes of the war. I have already dealt fully with it. But there has since come to me one little detail which reveals how very near we were, at one time, to a German discovery of the whole game. The two battle cruisers coaled at St. Vincent, Cape Verde Islands—Portuguese territory, within which we had no powers of censorship—and at the Pirates' Lair off the Brazilian coast. Their movements began to be talked about in Rio and the River Plate. Men knew of the Coronel disaster and shrewdly suspected that the two great ships were on their way to the South Atlantic. A description of their visit had been prepared, and was actually in type. It was intended for publication in a local South American paper. That it was not published, when urgent representations were made on our behalf, reveals how scrupulous was the consideration with which our friends of Brazil and the Argentine regarded our interests. There were no powers of censorship, the appeal was as man to man, an Englishman to a Portuguese, and the appeal prevailed—even over the

natural thirst of a journalist for highly interesting news. The battle cruisers coaled and passed upon their way, and no word of their visit went forth to Berlin or to von Spee.

The *Glasgow* was among the British cruisers which greeted Sturdee at the Pirates' Lair, and as soon as ammunition and stores had been distributed and coal taken in, the voyage to the Falkland Islands began. The squadron arrived in the evening of December 7, and at daybreak of the 8th von Spee ran upon his fate. The part played by the *Glasgow* in the action was less spectacular than that which fell to the battle cruisers, but it was useful and has some features of interest. Among other things it illustrates how little is known of the course of a naval action—spread over hundreds of miles of sea—while it takes place, and for some time even after it is over.

On the morning of December 8, at eight o'clock, the approach of the German squadron was observed, and at this moment the English squadron was hard at work coaling. By 9.45 steam was up and the pursuit began. The *Glasgow* was lying in the inner harbour with banked fires, ready for sea at two hours' notice, but her Engineer Lieut.-Commander Shrubsole and his staff so busied themselves that in little over an hour from the signal to raise steam she was under weigh, and an hour later she was moving in chase of the enemy at a higher speed than she obtained in her contractors' trials when she was a brand-new ship three years earlier. Throughout the war the engineering staff of the Royal Navy has never failed to go one better than anyone had the right to expect of it. It has never failed to respond to any call upon its energies or its skill, never.

In order that we may understand how the *Dresden* was able to make her escape unscathed from her pursuers—she bolted without firing a shot in the action—I must give some few details of the position of the ships when the German light cruisers were ordered by von Spee to take themselves off as best they might. Shortly before one o'clock the *Glasgow*, a much faster ship than anything upon our side except the two battle cruisers, was two miles ahead of the flagship *Invincible*, and it was Sturdee's intention to attack the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*—hull down on the horizon—with his speediest ships, the *Invincible*, *Inflexible*, and *Glasgow*. Our three other cruisers—*Carnarvon*, *Cornwall*, and *Kent*—were well astern of the leaders. At 1.4 the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* turned to the eastward to accept battle and to cover the retreat of their light cruisers, which were then making off towards the south-east.

Admiral Sturdee, seeing at once that the light cruisers might make good their escape unless the speedy *Glasgow* were detached in pursuit, called up the *Carnarvon* (Rear-Admiral Stoddart) in his support, and ordered Captain Luce in the *Glasgow* to take charge of the job of rounding up and destroying the *Leipzig*, *Nürnberg*, and *Dresden*. The *Glasgow*, therefore, began the chase at a grave disadvantage. She first had to work round the stern of the *Invincible*, pass the flagship upon her disengaged side, and then steam off from far in the rear after the *Cornwall* and *Kent*, which had already begun the pursuit. The *Leipzig* and *Nürnberg* were a long way off, and the *Dresden* was even farther. This cruiser, *Dresden*, though sister to the *Emden*, was, unlike her sister and the others of von Spee's light cruisers, fitted with Parsons' turbine engines. She was much the fastest of the German ships at the Falkland Islands, and beginning her flight with a start of some ten miles quickly was lost to sight beyond the horizon. The *Cornwall* and *Kent* had no chance at all of overtaking her, and the *Glasgow*, whose captain was the senior naval officer in command of the pursuing squadron of the three English cruisers, could not undertake a long stern chase by herself so long as the *Leipzig* and *Nürnberg* were in his course and had not been disposed of. He was obliged first to make sure of them. Steaming at 24½ knots, the *Glasgow* drew away from the battle cruisers and began to overhaul the *Leipzig* and *Nürnberg*. She decided to attack the *Leipzig*, which was nearest to her, and to regulate her speed so that the *Cornwall* and *Kent*—both more powerful but much slower ships than herself—would not be left behind. As it happened the engineering staffs of these not very rapid 'County' cruisers rose nobly to the emergency, the *Cornwall* was able to catch the *Leipzig* and to take a large part in her destruction, while the *Kent* kept on after the *Nürnberg* and, as it proved, was successful in destroying her also. One of the ten boilers of the *Nürnberg* had been out of action for weeks past and her speed a good deal below its best.

The sea is a very big place, but that portion of it contained within the ring of the visible horizon is very small. To those in the *Glasgow*, pressing on in chase of the *Leipzig*, the scene appeared strange and even ominous. They could see the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* far away, moving apparently in pursuit of themselves, but the battle cruisers hidden below the curve of the horizon they could not see. When firing from the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* ceased for a while—as it did at intervals—it seemed to the *Glasgow's* company that they were sandwiched between von Spee's armoured cruisers and his light cruisers, and that the battle cruisers, upon which the result of

the action depended, had disappeared into space. The telegraph room and the conning-tower doubtless knew what was happening, but the ship's company as a whole did not. To this brevity of vision, and to this detachment from exact information, one must set down the extraordinarily conflicting stories one receives from the observers of a naval action. They see what is within the horizon but not what is below it, and that which is below is not uncommonly far more important than that which is above.

Shortly before three o'clock the *Glasgow* opened upon the *Leipzig* with her foremost 6-inch gun at a range of about 12,000 yards (about seven miles), seeking to outrange the lighter 4.1-inch guns carried by the German cruiser. The distance closed down gradually to 10,000 yards, at which range the German guns could occasionally get in their work. They could, as the *Emden* showed in her fight with the *Sydney*, and as was observed at Coronel, do effective shooting even at 11,000 yards, but hits were difficult to bring off, owing to the steepness of the fall of the shells and the narrowness of the mark aimed at. For more than an hour the *Glasgow* engaged the *Leipzig* by herself, knocking out her secondary control position between the funnels, and allowing the *Cornwall* time to arrive and to help to finish the business with her fourteen 6-inch guns. At one time the range fell as low as 9000 yards, the *Leipzig's* gunners became very accurate, and the *Glasgow* suffered nearly all the casualties which overtook her in the action.

About 4.20 the *Cornwall* was able to open fire, and the *Glasgow* joined her, so that both ships might concentrate upon the same side of the *Leipzig*. Just as Admiral Sturdee in his fight with the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau* could not afford to run risks of damage far from a repairing base, so the *Glasgow* and the *Cornwall* with several hours of daylight before them were not justified in allowing impatience to hazard the safety of the ships. They had to regard the possible use of torpedoes and to look out for dropped mines. Neither torpedoes nor mines were, in fact, used by the Germans, though at one time in the course of the action drums, mistaken for mines, were seen in the water and carefully avoided. They were cases in which cartridges were brought from the magazines, and which were thrown overboard after being emptied. As the afternoon drew on the weather turned rather misty, and the attacking ships were obliged to close in a little and hurry up the business. This was at half-past five.

From the first the *Leipzig* never had a chance. She was out-steamed and utterly out-gunned. Her opponents had between them

four times her broadside weight of metal, and the *Cornwall* was an armoured ship. She never had a chance, yet she went on, fired some fifteen hundred rounds—all that remained in her magazines after Coronel—and did not finally cease firing until after seven o'clock. For more than four hours her company had looked certain death in the face yet gallantly stood to their work. From first to last von Spee's concentrated squadron played the naval game according to the immemorial rules, and died like gentlemen. Peace be to their ashes. In success and in failure they were the most gallant and honourable of foes. At seven o'clock the *Leipzig* was smashed to pieces, she was blazing from stem to stern, she was doomed, yet gave no sign of surrender.

At this moment, when the work of the *Glasgow* and the *Cornwall* had been done—the *Cornwall*, it should be noted, bore the heavier burden in this action; she was hit eighteen times, though little hurt, and played her part with the utmost loyalty and devotion—at this moment flashed the news through the ether that the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* had been sunk. The news spread, and loud cheers went up from the English ships. To the doomed company in the *Leipzig* those cheers must have carried some hint of the utter disaster which had overtaken their squadron. It was not until nine o'clock (six hours after the *Glasgow* had begun to fire upon her) that she made her last plunge—if a modern compartment ship does not blow up she takes a powerful lot of shell to sink her—and the English ships did everything that they could to save life. The *Glasgow* drew close up under her stern and lowered boats, at the same time signalling that she was trying to save life. There was no reply. Perhaps the signals were not read; perhaps there were not many left alive to make reply. The *Leipzig*, still blazing, rolled right over to port and disappeared. Six officers, including the Navigating Lieut.-Commander, and eight men were picked up by the *Glasgow*'s boats. Fourteen officers and men out of nearly three hundred! The captives were treated as honoured guests and made much of. Our officers and men took their gallant defeated foes to their hearts and gave them of their best. It was not until two days later, when news arrived that the *Leipzig*'s sister and consort the *Nürnberg* had been sunk by the *Kent*, that these brave men broke down. Then they wept. They cared little for the *Dresden*—a stranger from the North Atlantic—but the *Nürnberg* was their own consort, beside whom they had sailed for years, and beside whom they had fought. They had hoped to the last that she might make good her escape from the wreck of von Spee's squadron. When

that last hope failed they wept. When I think of von Spee's gallant men, so human in their strength and in their weakness, I cannot regard them as other than worthy brothers of the sea.

In the Coronel action the *Glasgow*, exposed to the concentrated fire of the *Leipzig* and *Dresden* for an hour, and to the heavy guns of the *Gneisenau* for some ten minutes, did not lose a single man. There were four slight wounds from splinters, that was all. But in her long fight with the *Leipzig* alone, assisted by the powerful batteries of the *Cornwall*, the *Glasgow* suffered two men killed, three men severely wounded, and six slightly hurt. Such are the strange chances of war. After Coronel, though they had seen two of their own ships go down and were in flight from an overwhelming enemy, the officers and men were wonderfully cheerful. The shrewder the buffets of Fate the stiffer became their tails. But after the Falklands, when success had wiped out the humiliation of failure, there came a nervous reaction. Defeat could not depress the spirit of these men, but victory, by relieving their minds from the long strain of the past months, made them captious and irritable. Perhaps their spirits were overshadowed by the prospect of the weary hunt for the fugitive *Dresden*.

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By wondrous accident perchance one may
Grove out a needle in a load of hay.

Four German cruisers had been sunk, but one, the *Dresden*, had escaped, and the story of the next three months is the story of a search—always wearisome, sometimes dangerous, sometimes even absurd. The Straits of Magellan, the islands of Tierra del Fuego and of the Horn, and the west coast of the South American spur are a maze of inlets, many uncharted, nearly all unsurveyed. The hunt for the elusive *Dresden* among the channels, creeks, and islands was far more difficult than the proverbial grope for a needle in a load of hay. A needle buried in hay cannot change its position; provided that it really be hidden in a load, patience and a magnet will infallibly bring it forth. The *Dresden* could move from one hiding-place to another, no search for her could ever exhaust the possible hiding-places, and it was not positively known until after she had been run down and destroyed where she had been in hiding. That she was found after three weary months may be explained by that one word which explains so much in naval work—coal. The *Dresden* after her flight from the Falkland Islands action was short of coal; von Spee's attendant colliers, *Baden* and *Santa Isabel*, had

been pursued and sunk by the *Bristol* and the armed liner *Macedonia*, and she was cast upon the world without means of replenishing her bunkers. This was, of course, known to her pursuers, so that they expected, and expected rightly, that she would hang about in some secluded creek until her dwindling supplies drove her forth upon the seas to hunt for more. Which is what happened.

Upon the evening of December 8, after the *Glasgow* and *Cornwall* had disposed of the *Leipzig*, there were one English and two German cruisers unaccounted for. The *Kent* had last been seen chasing the *Nürnberg* towards the south-east, while the *Dresden* was disappearing over the curve of the horizon to the south. Upon the following morning no news had come in from the *Kent*, and some anxiety was felt; it was necessary to find her before proceeding with the pursuit of the *Dresden*, and much valuable time was lost. It happened that during her fight with the *Nürnberg*, which she sank in a most business-like fashion, the *Kent's* aerials were shot away and she lost wireless contact with Sturdee's squadron. The *Glasgow* was ordered off to search for her, but fortunately the *Kent* turned up on the morning of the 10th deservedly triumphant. She had performed the great feat of catching and sinking a vessel which on paper was much faster than herself, and she had done it though short of coal and at the sacrifice of everything wooden on board, including the wardroom furniture. She was compelled with the *Glasgow* and *Cornwall* to return to Port Stanley for coal, and this delay was of the utmost service to the fugitive *Dresden*. Though the movements of that cruiser, in the interval, were not learned until much later, it will be convenient if I give them now, so that the situation may be made clear. The *Dresden* had owed her escape to her speed and to the occupation of the *Glasgow*—the only cruiser upon our side which could catch her—with the *Leipzig*. She got clear away, rounded the Horn on the 9th, and on December 10 entered the Cockburn Channel on the west coast of Tierra del Fuego. At Stoll Bay she passed the night, and her coal-bunkers being empty sent men ashore to cut enough wood to enable her to struggle up to Punta Arenas. She ran a great risk by making for so conspicuous a port, but she had no choice. Coal must be obtained somehow or her number would speedily go up. She was not entitled to get Chilean coal, for she had managed to delude the authorities into supplying her upon five previous occasions during the statutory period of three months. Once in three months a belligerent warship is permitted, under the Hague Rules, to coal at the ports of a neutral country; once she claims this privilege she is cut off from

getting more coal from the same country for three months. But the *Dresden* again managed, as she had already done four times before, to secure supplies illegitimately. She coaled at Punta Arenas, remained there for thirty-one hours—though after twenty-four hours she was liable to internment—and left at 10 P.M. on the 13th. It was this disregard for the Hague Rules which led to the destruction of the *Dresden* in Chilean territorial waters at Juan Fernandez three months later. We held that as she had broken international law deliberately many times, she was no longer entitled to claim its protection. She could not disregard it when it knocked against her convenience, and shelter herself under it when in need of a protective mantle. She had by her own violations become an outlaw.

At 2.30 A.M. on the 13th, Sturdee learned that the *Dresden* was at Punta Arenas. The *Bristol*, which was ready, jumped off the mark at once; the *Inflexible* and the *Glasgow*, which were not quite ready, got off at 9.15. Thus it happened that the *Bristol* reached Punta Arenas seventeen hours after the *Dresden* had left, to vanish, as it were, into space, and not to be heard of again for a couple of months. What she did was to slip down again into the Cockburn Channel and lie at anchor in Hewett Bay near the southern exit. On December 26 she shifted her quarters to an uncharted and totally uninhabited creek, called the Gonzales Channel, and there she lay in idle security until February 4.

During the long weeks of the *Dresden's* stay in Hewett Bay and the Gonzales Channel, the English cruisers were busily hunting for her among the islets and inlets of the Magellan Straits, Tierra del Fuego, and the west coast of the South American spur. The *Carnarvon*, *Cornwall*, and *Kent* took charge of the Magellan Straits, the *Glasgow* and *Bristol* ferreted about the recesses of the west coast with the *Inflexible* outside of them to chase the sea-rat should she break cover for the open. The battle cruiser *Australia* came in from the Pacific and with the 'County' cruiser *Newcastle*, from Mexico, kept watch off Valparaiso. The *Dresden*, lying snug in the Gonzales Channel, was not approached except once, on December 29, when one of the searchers was within twenty miles of her hiding-place. The weather was thick and she was not seen. The big ships did not long waste their time over the search. It was one better suited to light craft, for lighter craft even than the *Glasgow* or *Bristol*, for whom the uncharted channels often threatened grave dangers. Armed patrols or picket boats, of shallow draught, were best suited to the work, and in its later stages were furnished up and made available.

On December 16 the battle cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible* were recalled to England, and the *Canopus* went north to act as guardship at the precious Pirates' Lair which has figured so often in these pages. The *Australia* passed on her way to the Atlantic, across which the Canadian contingents were in need of convoy, and the supervision of the *Dresden* search devolved upon Admiral Stoddart of the *Carnarvon*. The admiral with the *Carnarvon* and *Cornwall* remained in and out of the Magellan Straits, while the captain of the *Glasgow*, with him the *Kent*, *Bristol*, and *Newcastle*, was put in charge of the Chilian Archipelago. Gradually as time went on and the *Dresden* lay low—all this while in the Gonzales Channell—other ships went away upon more urgent duties and the chase was left to the *Glasgow*, *Kent*, and an armed liner *Orama*. The *Bristol* had butted herself ashore in one of the unsurveyed channels and was obliged to seek a dock for repairs. The great concentration of which the *Glasgow* had been the focus was over, she was now back at her old police work, though not upon her old station. She had begun the war in sole charge of the South Atlantic; the wheel of circumstance had brought her, with her consorts, to the charge of the South Pacific.

Although the *Glasgow's* company had had many experiences of the risks of war, they had never felt in action the strain upon their nerves which was always with them day in day out during that long weary hunt for the *Dresden* in the Chilian Archipelago. They explored no less than 7000 miles of narrow waters, for the most part uncharted, feeling their way by lead and by mother wit, becoming learned in the look of the towering rocks which shut them in, and in the kelp growing upon their sea margins. The channels wound among steep high cliffs, around which they could not see. As they worked stealthily round sharp corners, they were always expecting to encounter the *Dresden* with every gun and torpedo tube registered upon the narrow space into which they must emerge. Their own guns and torpedoes were always ready for instant action, but in this game of hide and seek the advantage of surprise must always rest with the hidden conscious enemy. This daily strain went on through half of December and the whole of January and February! One cannot feel surprised to learn that in the view of the *Glasgow's* company the actions of Coronel and the Falklands were gay picnics when set in comparison with that hourly expectation throughout two and a half months of the sudden discovery of the *Dresden*, and that anticipated blast of every gun and mouldy which she could on the instant bring to bear. Added to this danger of sudden attack

was the ever-present risk of maritime disaster. It is no light task to navigate for three months waters to which exist no sailing directions and no charts of even tolerable accuracy. Upon Captain Luce and upon his second in command, Lieutenant-Commander Wilfred Thompson, rested a load of responsibility which it would be difficult to overestimate.

It was not until early in March that any authentic news of the movements of the *Dresden* became available. Upon February 4 she had issued forth of the Gonzales Channel and crept stealthily up the Chilian coast. To the *Glasgow* had come during the long weeks of the *Dresden's* hiding many reports which she was obliged to investigate. Many times our own cruisers were seen by ignorant observers on shore and mistaken for the *Dresden*; out would flow stories which wandering by way of South American ports—and sometimes by way of London itself—would come to rest in the *Glasgow's* wireless-room and increase the burden thrown upon her officers. More than once she was taken by shore watchers to be the *Dresden*, and urgently warned from home to be on the look-out for herself!

At last the veil lifted. The *Dresden*, with her coal of Punta Arenas approaching exhaustion, was sighted at a certain spot well up the Chilian coast where had been situated von Spee's secret Lair. The news was rushed out to the *Glasgow*, and since her consort, the *Kent*, was nearest to the designated spot this cruiser was despatched at once to investigate. As at the Falklands action, her engineers rose to the need for rapid movement. For thirty-six hours continuously she steamed northwards at 17 knots, and arrived just before daybreak on the 7th. Nothing was then in sight, nor until three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day, the 8th. While in misty weather the *Kent* was waiting and watching out at sea, a cloud bank lifted and the *Dresden* was revealed. She had not been seen by us since the day of her flight, December 8, exactly three months before! The *Dresden* was a shabby spectacle, her paint gone, her sides raw with rust and standing high out of the water. She was evidently light, and almost out of coal. The *Kent* at once made for her quarry, but the *Dresden*, a much faster ship, drew away. Foul as she was, for she had not been in dock since the war began, the *Kent* was little cleaner. The *Dresden* drew away, but the relentless pursuit of the indefatigable *Kent* kept her at full speed for six hours, and left her with no more than enough fuel to reach Masafuera or Juan Fernandez. By thus forcing the *Dresden* to burn most of the fuel which still remained in her bunkers, the *Kent*

performed an invaluable service. This was on March 8. Juan Fernandez was judged to be the most likely spot in which she would take refuge, and thither the *Glasgow*, *Kent*, and *Orama* foregathered, arriving at daybreak on the 14th. In Cumberland Bay, 600 yards from the shore, the *Dresden* lay at anchor; the chase was over. She had arrived at 8.30 A.M. on the 9th; she had been in Chilian waters for nearly five days. Yet her flag was still flying, and there was no evidence that she had been interned. Cumberland Bay is a small settlement, and there was no Chilian force present capable of interning a German warship.

I will indicate what happened. The main facts have been told in the correspondence which took place later between the Chilian and British Governments. I will tell the story as I have myself gathered it, and as I interpret it.

The *Dresden* lay in neutral Chilian waters, yet her flag was flying, and she had trained her guns upon the English squadron which had found her there. There was nothing to prevent her—though liable to internment—from making off unless steps were taken at once to put her out of action. She had many times before broken the neutrality regulations of Chili, and was rightly held by us to be an outlaw to be captured or sunk at sight. Acting upon this just interpretation of the true meaning of neutrality, Captain Luce of the *Glasgow*, the senior naval officer, directed his own guns and those of the *Kent* to be immediately fired upon the *Dresden*. The first broadside dismounted her fore-castle guns and set her ablaze. She returned the fire without touching either of the English ships. Then, after an inglorious two and a half minutes, the *Dresden's* flag came down.

Captain Lüdecke of the *Dresden* despatched a boat conveying his 'adjutant' to the *Glasgow* for what he called 'negotiations,' but the English captain declined a parley. He would accept nothing but unconditional surrender. Lüdecke claimed that his ship was entitled to remain in Cumberland Bay for repairs, that she had not been interned, and that his flag had been struck as a signal of negotiation and not of surrender. When the Englishman Luce would not talk except through the voices of his guns, the German adjutant went back to his ship and Lüdecke then blew her up. His crew had already gone ashore, and the preparations for destroying the *Dresden* had been made before her captain entered upon his so-called 'negotiations.'

It was upon the whole fortunate that Lüdecke took the step of sinking the *Dresden* himself. It might have caused awkward diplo-

matic complications had we taken possession of her in undoubted Chilian territorial waters, and yet we could not have permitted her any opportunity of escaping under the fiction of internment. Nothing would have been heard of internment if the English squadron had not turned up—the *Dresden* had already made an appointment with a collier—and if we had not by our fire so damaged the cruiser that she could not have taken once more to the sea. Her self-destruction saved us a great deal of trouble. In the interval between the firing and the sinking of the *Dresden*, the Maritime Governor of Juan Fernandez suggested that the English should take away essential parts of the machinery and telegraph for a Chilian warship to do the internment business. Neither of these proceedings was necessary after the explosion. The *Dresden* was at the bottom of Cumberland Bay, and the British Government apologised to the Chilians for the technical violation of territorial waters. The apology was accepted, and everyone was happy—not the least the officers and men of the *Dresden* who, after months of aimless, hopeless wanderings, found themselves still alive and in a sunny land flowing with milk and honey. After their long stay in Tierra del Fuego the warmth of Chili must have seemed like paradise. The *Dresden* yielded to the *Glasgow* one item of the spoils of war. After the German cruiser had sunk, a small pig was seen swimming about in the Bay. It had been left behind by its late friends, but found new ones in the *Glasgow's* crew. That pig is alive still, or was until quite recently. Grown very large, very hairy, and very truculent, and appropriately named von Tirpitz, it has been preserved from the fate which waits upon less famous pigs, and possesses in England a sty and a nameplate all to its distinguished self.

With the sinking of the *Dresden* the cruise of the *Glasgow*, which I have set out to tell, comes to a close. She returned to the South Atlantic, and for a further stretch of eighteen months her officers and men continued their duties on board. But life must for them have become rather dull. There were no more Coronels, or Falkland Islands actions, or hunts for elusive German cruisers. Just the daily work of a light cruiser on patrol duty in time of war. When in the limelight they played their part worthily, and I do not doubt continued to play it as worthily, though less conspicuously, when they passed into the darkness of the wings, and other officers, other men, and other ships occupied in their turn the bright scenes upon the naval stage.

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IF YOU CAN . . . LOSE.

BY E. L. WHITE.

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch and toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss.

The little shop was dying hard.

Throughout the forenoon its torpidity had been barely disturbed by the tinkle of the door-bell that announced customers; and even these had failed to drift in during the afternoon.

About the hour of four, Carolus Wicks—the proprietor of the shop—ceased his pacing of the uneven floor and, crossing to the millinery counter—where perilous stacks of straw hats flanked a flawed mirror in a gilded frame—intently regarded himself in the glass.

He saw a face planned on a scale generous to nobility, with majesty in the poise of the head and with every line of the massive features instinct with forceful individuality. The eye that pierced the semi-gloom of the mirror was that of a Personality.

He viewed his reflection with a certain sombre pride.

'Destiny!' he murmured. 'It's the final proof. I shall follow Bolingbroke!'

He uttered the name as one who invokes a Power.

Crossing to the door, he cast a long look around him, from the cage with the glazed top—where he intermittently dwelt, when he doubled the mysterious entity of 'Cash' with that of 'Sign'—to the counter laden with bales of Manchester goods.

The 'Manchester' was Wicks' speciality.

Slowly he walked out into the street and began to put up the shutters.

In the middle of his task, he stopped suddenly, as though petrified; a gleam kindled in his eye at the sight of a man who, in the full glare of the westering sun, strode in the middle of the street, with the conscious pride of its creator.

He attracted attention both by his arrogant carriage and dominant expression. His sartorial perfection was rather that of advertisement than the self-effacing quality of the well-dressed man.

This was Horatio Bolingbroke—a man who had found a cinder-heap and made a town thereof—who played with financial issues as a juggler with his balls—who dehumanised men to puppets, in the furtherance of his ambitions.

A curious smile stole round Wicks' mouth, as he marked the eagle eyes, the winged nostrils, the resolute mouth. For he knew that he was gazing at the replica of the face in the glass.

He braced his shoulders and, gloomily appreciative of the drama of his situation, stepped into the back-parlour behind the shop, to make his announcement.

'I've just put up the shutters. Probably for the last time!'

His wife looked up from the letter that she was writing. Her comely full-blown prettiness resembled that of a rose whose petals have been assaulted by storm, for her large pink cheeks were damp and her hair dishevelled.

'Doesn't it sound awful? Oh dear, oh dear! I never thought when I married you that you would bring me to this!'

She looked around her sitting-room, with the culminating glory of hand-labour evident in each treasure—hand-painted piano-top, hand-carved bookcase, hand-embroidered cushion. Even the flowers were not subject to Nature's limitation of mortality.

With a sigh, she took up her pen again.

'I'm writing to Uncle Elijah to jog his memory about the loan. He may send it us yet. He's been known to do funny things sometimes.'

'And it *would* be a funny thing,' sneered Wicks. 'Who's likely to give £500 for me? I'm not a competition sweet-pea, nor yet a prize story.'

As he spoke, he glanced in the glass. In the setting sunlight, with frowning brows and folded arms, he might have been Napoleon on board the *Bellerophon*.

'A woman always expects a man to succeed,' he said, 'but women are poor judges of conditions. The greatest is prone to failure. . . . Take Bolingbroke! It's common talk that he's on the verge of ruin. Yet I saw him, two minutes ago, swaggering down the street, flower in his buttonhole and twirling his stick, as though he was going smash for the good of his health. It was fine, though!' His face brightened. 'That buttonhole, now! The spirit of bravado. He may be a scamp, swindler—what you like—but you can't deny he's a *man*!'

May Wicks coloured with exasperation.

'Really, haven't you troubles enough of your own to look after, without raving about that rogue? You exhaust my patience. Why don't you go up to Woodruff House to find out what's happening there?'

Her husband's blank face forced her to explain.

'I never knew such a man! Haven't you heard they're operating on old Draycott to-day, and a poor chance at best? Trust you not to know, with the funeral order already placed, and just at a time when some ready-money might tide us over until the luck turned. Oh, don't stand there! Put on your hat and go!'

As his wife literally thrust him from the room, Wicks shrank to the defensive male. But on the threshold, he came back, and taking from a vase an artificial carnation, he put it in his button-hole.

He stepped into the red sunlight, his mind a riot of conflicting emotions, paramount among them a smarting sense of injury at his wife's lack of comprehension.

She blamed him for his failure, while his mental vision was shot by the vivid streak of a gigantic constellation hurtling through space to flaming combustion, and drawing in its train its least satellite.

But while he pitied her for that feminine practicality that made it impossible for her to follow him into his refuge of imagination, the subterranean current of her resentment rankled none the less acutely. It left him alone with his Secret—the enchanting force which possessed him to the exclusion of nearly every other interest.

While doomed in the finite world to stand behind a counter, he was yet conscious of being at grips with far-reaching issues, stretching beyond his ken into the uncharted region of the Infinite. He was as one who stands before a Curtain, which, at any moment, might be drawn aside.

It had all begun with his inordinate admiration of Bolingbroke and his own facial resemblance to the great man. Although he was too modest to allude to it himself, its existence had been proved on that historic occasion when he and his family had been admitted to the reserved paddock at the races.

As his worship passed into a creed, he began to study the private history of his idol, to find the first link of the chain forged by destiny.

By extraordinary coincidence, he and Bolingbroke had been born on the same day.

On the shock of the discovery, there followed a whole sequence of duplications, each cumulative and leading up to the electric discovery. It was a revelation of almost staggering force, revealing as it did—to the material mind of the draper—the existence of an unseen Power.

He—Carolus Wicks—was the Shadow of the great Substance—Horatio Bolingbroke.

Despite the inward exultation of a share in that coveted but denied power, Wicks' thoughts, as he walked along, were gloomy enough to satisfy his wife's pessimism. He found himself instinctively avoiding recognition, in morbid anticipation of the neglect that would be accorded to the insolvent tradesman. When he reached the residential quarter of the town, the urgent need to save his poor little business from disruption infused his errand with the acid of anxiety.

Woodruff House—a detached residence standing in its own grounds—was built on the top of a hilly road. Of solid structure and uninspired architecture, it barely stood out against the clouded sky—pearly-white as pear-blossom. A long line of windows flashed back on every pane a crystal sun.

A gravelled drive, bordered with shrubs, led up to the front portico, in front of which was drawn a car, as though in readiness. On each side of the path, the earth was pierced with scores of tiny green spears, that spoke of the conquest of a regiment of snowdrops over the invasion of frost.

As Wicks neared the house, he saw, leaning over the gates, the humped outline of a motionless figure.

With a thrill of prescience he recognised the silent watcher. It was Bolingbroke.

As he gazed in awed admiration, Bolingbroke abruptly turned his massive head and shot a look of interrogation. Wicks thought he detected surprise—the astonishment of a man suddenly confronted with his own shadow.

In the pride of that mutual recognition, he almost forgot the urgency of his errand, until Bolingbroke recalled it.

'Want to go in?'

He moved away from the gates as he spoke.

'No, thank you, sir.' Although his voice was beyond his control, Wicks chose his words with care, in his anxiety to create

his impression. 'I'm here—merely as a spectator. I trust you will not credit me with any nefarious designs. But the truth is that my affairs cause this house to be of vital interest to me. In short, sir, I'm watching the windows.'

Bolingbroke started. Then he made an illustrative motion—the gesture of one who has subdued the art of pantomime to supplement public oratory.

Wicks nodded.

'That's it, sir. I'm waiting to see if those blinds come down. . . . I am sure I don't know why I should intrude my little affairs on you, but—it would make all the difference to me.'

'How's that?'

The question was almost barked.

Carolus Wicks felt in his pocket. Even in the exposition of the calamity that was blasting him, the fact that he was about to establish a basis of intimate confidence between his idol and himself drew its sting from the situation. He was drenched with the unreasoning elation of a fulfilled dream.

With trembling fingers, he presented his card.

'Perhaps you'll condescend to read that, sir?' He persisted in his attitude of humility, with an artful impulse to render the moment of self-revelation more overwhelming. 'Yes, sir . . . an uncommon name. Useful asset in trade. . . . Well, sir, for some years, for various causes, I've been playing a losing game. I've been up against big odds—' he threw open his chest with a militant gesture—'cramped for want of capital when I wanted to expand. It's *maddening* to feel yourself full of suppressed power throttled up inside you like steam with no outlet—all driven back upon you till it breaks you up—all because you're too strong for your limits and can't open out!'

He saw that Bolingbroke was studying him with intent interest.

'Go on!' he commanded.

'So, sir, I borrowed. But it wasn't enough. Not for me. And the luck turned against me. You may be the pluckiest caller in the world, but it doesn't help when the other holds the cards. And so—' he swallowed in his throat, searching for some fitting phrase wherewith to veil his ignominy—'so, at this present minute, sir, I—I'm afraid I can't call myself solvent!'

Bolingbroke laughed shortly.

'Broke? It's happened before. But—where's the connection between you—and this?'

He jerked his thumb towards the line of gleaming windows.

Recalled to a sense of fast-dissolving reality, Wicks spoke soberly.

'Because, even now, at the eleventh hour, a little ready money might help me to tide over. In the drapery, especially in small towns, it's customary to include an undertaking branch. And the old gentleman lying up there is'—he tapped his forehead before he remembered the status of his auditor. 'What I mean is he's what *you* would call an eccentric.'

'What I call a ruddy crank,' amended Bolingbroke curtly.

'Precisely, sir. In any case, he's had his funeral planned and entrusted to me these two years. I assure you, it will be more like a pageant than a funeral. Make live men feel there's some compensation, if they've got to go. And—it will be a cash transaction.'

Bolingbroke frowned incredulously.

'Mean to tell me twopence would set you on your legs again?'

'Everything is a matter of degree.'

Wicks spoke stiffly. Yet even while his failure seemed of pitiful inadequacy, that strange, exultant conviction reminded him that he was—in some dim way—a participant in a vast financial collapse.

Bolingbroke seemed to have forgotten his companion, as he leaned over the gate in brooding melancholy.

Suddenly he turned, and spoke as though on impulse.

'Your story has interested me—extraordinarily. We are total strangers. Yet the curious fact is that your history might be my own. In miniature, of course. Know me?'

As he tilted his chin arrogantly, Wicks gasped at the amazing modesty of the query.

'Is there anyone who *doesn't* know Mr. Horatio Bolingbroke? The papers—'

'Ah yes, the Press—curse it!' Bolingbroke glowered at a corner of cheap ivory-tinted paper that protruded from Wicks' pocket. 'Then you know that I'm on the verge of an almighty smash. And—same as in your case—I stand to be richer by some six figures by that man's death. . . . God! If only those blinds would come down!'

Both men stared at the house. It seemed to stand out from its background with additional prominence, now that the twilight was beginning to fall. The clouds were rolling away, and against a strip of lemon-green sky, Sirius showed faintly, as a point of silver

wire. A thrush, on a naked copper-beech, burst into its recurrent phrase.

Bolingbroke consulted his watch.

'Ought to be over. Lord, we're a pair of precious churchyard ghouls, on the gloat.'

'I know.' Wicks spoke deprecatingly. 'But I understand that this operation can only give partial relief—merely a prolongation of misery. God knows I wish for no man's death!'

'And God knows I do!' Bolingbroke gripped Wicks' shoulder and spoke in a sharpened tone.

'Look, man—look!'

At one of the windows appeared the figure of a woman in a nursing uniform. Even at that distance, Wicks could distinguish the raven wings of hair that framed a pale, melancholy face with the racial traits of a Jewess.

Her poise was instinct with fate as she raised her arm.

'Pull, woman!'

A passion of force was concentrated in Bolingbroke's whisper. Wicks noticed his hands, as they gripped the gate, and shuddered to see how instantly the veins started out in swollen lumps.

The nurse stood motionless for a space. It seemed to Wicks that, in that moment of suspense, the atmosphere was rarefied to the cracking-point of tensivity, and he feared to draw a breath, lest a feather should disturb the balance.

The woman threw open the window and turned away.

Bolingbroke smothered an oath. Regaining his self-control, he turned to his companion.

'Odd that we—strangers—should be partners in this deal!'

'No, it's *not* odd at all.'

Wicks purposely omitted the 'sir' that marked the division of values. His eyes glowed brilliantly from the pallor of his face. While he felt that the great moment of revelation was at hand, he distrusted his own temerity.

'It's not odd,' he repeated defiantly. 'It is Destiny. . . . I must ask you to listen to some strange facts, which you can verify. You and I were born on the same date—April 2, 1874. No, don't interrupt! We were both married in 1898—went into business in 1900. . . . There's lots more, too. Personal tastes all duplicated. Oh, I've ferreted it out. Asked roundabout questions, read chatty paragraphs—"Who's Who"—'

Bolingbroke interrupted.

'Trust the Press to know a man's name and business before he is born! You're sober, man, aren't you? Well, what was your object in this—inquisition?'

Wicks grasped at the remnant of his courage.

'Because I have always admired you above all other men. I can't make you realise what you stand for to me. Bigness. That's it. And although I'm only a small tradesman, I've felt bigness, too—inside me. And I've felt it *wonderful* that we should pair like we do. In looks too. I've often been mistaken for you.'

Bolingbroke scrutinised him intently.

'Strange,' he said at last, 'that a man should not know his own face! Well—what do you make of it all—my Double?'

Wicks caught at the words.

'You've said it,' he shouted. 'Doubles! *I'm you and you're me.*' The air seemed to thresh under his feet as he spluttered into speech. 'We're one Person—in halves. We rise together, sink together. . . . That's why I don't mind being poor and insignificant, because, through you, I've got my stake in something big. Fate. And you can't alter Fate!'

For answer, Bolingbroke pointed to the house.

'Fate,' he repeated. 'There's our fate. It's over!'

As he spoke the front door opened yet wider, and from the shadows of the portico a chauffeur appeared. Under his ministrations, the automobile purred its readiness for departure.

Three men stood upon the threshold. Bolingbroke pointed to one of them—a spare grey man, with something of the bristling activity and intelligence of a rat. This was the famous surgeon, who harnessed inspiration to mathematical precision and inexhaustible nerve.

'Jayne—the throat-man. He's the last word. I know him. He'll put me wise.'

He passed his hand over his brow as he spoke. Wicks was horrified to notice that his face was thickly beaded with great drops of moisture. He viewed them with a feeling of shame, as of a devotee who sees the brazen features of his god melt in the furnace.

He was relieved to find himself alone. The air was sharpened at the first invasion of night-frost, and he saw his own breath faintly. In the gathering darkness, the garden showed as a sloe-bloom blue vagueness, against which the naked black tree-trunks

of the foreground stood out with the sharpness of scaffolding. Sirius now blazed in electric fire in the violet heavens.

With his eyes fixed on the figures of the four men, now in conversation, Wicks, with his confused sense of merged destinies, trembled at the magnitude of Bolingbroke's stake. A town had grown under his fingers, as a card-castle. And as a player hesitates to lay the topmost card, lest it destroy the balance, so Bolingbroke towered over a tottering structure of factories, shops, offices. One card too many—one venture too hazardous . . .

On the clear air, Bolingbroke's laugh rang out.

Wicks' gasp was almost a sob. So all was well.

Suddenly he was conscious of a teasing sensation, as of the wings of butterflies beating on his face. Putting up his hand, he found, to his surprise, that drops of sweat were coursing slowly down his cheeks.

Unwittingly, he had duplicated Bolingbroke's agony of suspense.

The crunching of gravel recalled him to reality. Bolingbroke was walking briskly in his direction.

Wicks marked every detail of his appearance—the grey frock-coat, the white spats—the apricot carnation. Once again, he gloried in the erect carriage of his head and the composure of the face. Some powerful counter-emotion had erased all signs of the vigil.

'Well?'

Bolingbroke looked at the sanguine face.

'Success. Another two years to go, Jayne says. Wonderful "op," I'm told. Big score for Jayne.'

Wicks paled—incredulous of the verdict. So great a crash—while not even a whisper had stirred the evening peace!

'And you—' he stammered; 'what will happen to you?'

'To me?' Bolingbroke thrust out his jaw with a truculent movement. 'I start over again. That's all.'

That was all. Yet Wicks could not comprehend.

'All over again? *You!* Sink to the bottom? When you've reached the top? *Impossible!* When you—'

Bolingbroke cut him short roughly.

'Good lord, man—it's not what *I was!* That's past and done with. It's what *I am!*'

With a nod of farewell, he turned away. But Wicks caught at his arm.

'And me—I——'

'Ah! It's your funeral too! I forgot. Well, you start over again too, I take it. Don't we pair—my Double?'

Unconscious of any mockery in the smile, Wicks gazed after the receding figure. In this revelation of strength, Bolingbroke outgrew humanity, and Wicks beheld him towering through a Brocken mist.

The glory of the moment bubbled through his veins like strong wine, stirring within him a riot of sensations. Like one who has sustained the shock of explosion, his faculties were still fluttering vagrants, and his personality a blank vessel for strange tenancy. He was filled with his realisation of the supremacy of the Will—the impregnability of the Soul. The Wheel had broken them; yet he and Bolingbroke had arisen from the dust and faced the future—empty yet unafraid.

He walked down the hill, grinding star-dust under his feet.

'Not what I was! What I am!'

At every stride his mind leaped ahead, in pursuit of myriad possibilities. His new start would be unhampered by his old cramped methods. He was now free to develop his operations—to ramify. Plans should no longer be passive captives in brain-cells, but active factors towards success. His past mistakes stood out as milestones towards victory—each a memorial to an error that need never be duplicated. Akin to the Fire of London that cleansed a plague-area, his failure stood revealed in its true glory.

His face heated, his eyes afire, he marched in the middle of the road—a giant among pigmies, while overhead in the darkening sky a belt and sword of stars showed that he walked in titanic company.

He was recalled to a sense of traffic-regulations by a petulant hoot, and he leaped to the pavement, flush with one of the smaller houses.

The gas of the sitting-room had been just lit, and its beam filtered through a rose silk shade with a fringe of pendant crystal beads.

The sight of the decoration reminded Wicks of a similar ornament in the process of manufacture at home. . . . May would miss her parlour sadly; her puny ambitions became concrete realities in the shapes of cushions and ornaments. Women were like that—bound to little things.

Yet while he pitied her for the limitations of her imagination, the austerity of the new venture claimed May for the first victim.

His face was sober as he neared the end of the road which debouched into the main street, aglow with lavish illumination.

On every side of Wicks were brilliantly lighted shops, each, according to its prosperity, a phase of that trade which he was to exploit to the pinnacle of fortune. In some vague manner, they chilled the hot flow of his confidence.

He looked through the windows of a grocer's shop, towards the counter, behind which a sunken-cheeked man, in a white apron, sliced bacon in a machine. He bore the same name as that emblazoned on the shop-sign :

'Munster Stores. Late Chas. King.'

'Suppose I shall have to take a berth, like poor King !'

Wicks instinctively lowered his head, as though warding off a blow between the eyes.

To divert the current of his thoughts, he speculated on the nature of Bolingbroke's second venture. Impossible to conceive him apron-girt and counter-bound ! It was easier to picture him as fustian-clad and breaking stones, in symbolic action.

But his mind refused to respond to the stimulus of Bolingbroke. All those small houses and contemptible retail-shops were so much garnered earth-force that, through sheer force of gravity, had sucked his feet from the stars.

He found himself thinking of a little shop, with uneven boards, that, in at least two corners, terminated in a mouse-hole. The mahogany counter was cumbered with stacks of heavy goods—pink flannelette and grey linings. Emerald-green and Wedgewood blue cardboard boxes advertised their treasure of lace and ribbon through many a broken side. Bunches of purple calico violets and yellow primroses were festooned overhead in floral gala. The air was faintly heavy with the odour of unbleached calico.

And, stretching from the shop, the unseen channels that nourished a home, a wife, a family—the unseen strands that bound him to the honourable traditions of the trade—the unseen web of happy associations and the bloom of memories.

Suddenly he became aware of violent internal compression—an unfamiliar sensation which he resisted with all the force of his manhood. He almost ran past a small building whose closed shutters indicated that another small shop was dead.

His latch-key was impotently scraping the paint from the door, when it was opened, and his wife stood before him. He noticed that her lashes were matted with tears.

He shook his head.

'No luck!'

Then the passage was momentarily blotted out, and he was only dimly aware of his wife's arm leading him into the parlour, while with shaking fingers she fluttered something white before his eyes.

'It's just come. The cheque from Uncle Elijah! Oh, Carolus, we're saved!'

He stared at it with incredulous eyes.

'No, no,' he cried incoherently. 'It *can't* be. Can't go against Destiny. Bolingbroke smashed and I——'

'Bolingbroke? What has Bolingbroke to do with you? Look!' May's voice rose in an hysterical note. 'Look at the cheque! Can't you realise it?'

Instead of obeying her, Carolus Wicks looked in the glass.

He saw a man with an ill-proportioned head, a shock of rough hair, plebeian features, watery eyes and a tremulous mouth. A face totally lacking in distinction. The face of a nonentity. The face of any small man—of any little tradesman.

Ay, but of a solvent tradesman. While Bolingbroke was a beggar.

Could he realise it? For answer, Carolus Wicks laid his head upon his wife's shoulder, and while she sobbed in happy unison, revealed the full depths—and heights—of his realisation.

AGRICULTURE AFTER WATERLOO.

BY WALTER WALLAS.

THE security given to farmers by the fixing of prices until 1922 raises the question—how did agriculture fare at the close of the great European war that ended in 1815?

Had Arthur Young set out on another Tour in the bitter weather of the spring of 1816—he did not die until 1820—or had the vitriolic Cobbett made his first Rural Ride five years before 1821, what a picture might have been drawn of the countryside!

Gangs of agricultural labourers were to be met on the road or seen in the gravel pits, working reluctantly and badly for parish pay. The roundsmen, or labourers sent round by the overseer, would be met slouching along the highway to put in a few hours at a strange farm, to qualify for poor relief, or families of labourers returning after sixteen years' absence to their native villages, so that they might qualify for the Poor Law allowance. The farmers themselves would be seen despondent and dispirited, walking home from market before noon, where a few years before they had driven in the smart gigs with their daughters beside them, having sat long over their wine at their clubs waiting for their daughters, who had gone to the dancing-master after the visit to the milliner's. Glad they were to get home early now, to escape the tradesmen whose Christmas bills were unpaid, and even to save the small expense of the ordinary. Hundreds of farmers were already in gaol under the Debtors Act, even in rich counties like Somerset and Lincolnshire; and these were by no means always spend-thrifts either, but often men who had been careful and industrious.

Many farmers were, with their families, in the workhouse, and in his favourite Suffolk, Arthur Young would have found farmers whom he had known as substantial tenants, glad to get work as day labourers. As he drew near homestead after homestead, he would have seen the empty stack-yards—all had been threshed after harvest in 1815, and sold in a glutted market to pay the Michaelmas rent, or to meet other more pressing liabilities of taxes, rate, or tithe, the banks having refused to advance the money. In Devonshire, and doubtless elsewhere, there were midnight flittings—tenants secretly removing their furniture

and disappearing. In almost every county cases arose of absconding occupiers running away from long leases at high rentals which now spelt debt, the workhouse, or the gaol. Or, riding on a fine moonlight night in Norfolk, Arthur Young would have been struck by the number of farmhouses strangely lighted up. There the sheriff's bailiffs were keeping ghastly revel.

Coming at sunset on a Saturday to a Northamptonshire or Nottinghamshire village green, he would have found a strange assembly in free and victorious Britain. Standing on a chair, the overseer; round him stood the farmers and small gentry. Further away, a sullen crowd of labourers with their women. Man by man the labourers were put up to auction by name. In Nottinghamshire 'they were let generally at about from 1s. 6d. to 2s. per week; the farmer or other person finding victuals to the labourer for six days only,' an additional allowance being made by the overseer. Such was the working of the iniquitous Poor Law of the time.

Were Young, with his generous nature, to be struck by the honest face of a Warwickshire labourer on the road, and make inquiry about his weekly budget, he would find that when in work the man had 12s. a week, out of which to support a wife and four children, to provide fuel, clothing, shoes, candles, soap, salt, beer (if any beer he could obtain), and set apart 6d. to 1s. a week as house rent—not so bad, after all, compared to 1770, Young would conclude, but would it last?

The plough was nearly at a stand, and the only trade that flourished was that of the bailiff. Land that had been reclaimed went back to the weeds. In Northumberland the Duke of Roxburghe was sowing down several farms with grass seeds. From Berkshire they wrote: 'We are endeavouring to get our arable into grass as fast as possible.' Eight thousand acres were unoccupied within a few miles of Long Stowe in Cambridgeshire. No man would touch them.

From many quarters bitter regrets came that bad pasture had been foolishly broken. In Derbyshire they 'had over-ploughed.' There lies to our hand a very vivid human document, which gives in a series of letters a first-hand account of the state of agriculture in the period covering from six to nine months after Waterloo. This document consists of a series of letters, with accompanying statistics, which were sent by 'many of the most opulent and intelligent landholders' in reply to a circular letter sent by the Board of Agriculture to every part of England, Scotland, and Wales

after the Christmas vacation 1815, and were subsequently published by the Board. Here are the very voices of the men themselves. Arthur Young had made his tours over twenty years before the wars began, and Cobbett did not set out on his Rural Rides until five years after Waterloo.

Between Young and Cobbett comes this volume of the Board of Agriculture on the state of agriculture in February, March, and April 1816.¹

The Board's circular letter had contained nine queries, the principal of which were :

'Are any farms in your neighbourhood unoccupied by tenants ; and have landlords in consequence been obliged to take them into their own hands ?

'Have any tenants within your knowledge given notice to their landlords of quitting their farms ?

'Have any farms lately been re-let at an abatement of rent ?

'What circumstances denoting the distress of farmers have come to your knowledge ?

'Is the present distress greater on arable, or on grass farms ?

'Does the country in which you reside suffer from a diminished circulation of paper ?

'What is the state of the labouring poor, and have the poor-rates been affected ?

'What remedies occur to you for alleviating these difficulties ? '

To these queries the Board received 326 letters in reply, and these were published at once (and republished the same year), together with an analysis of the returns and tabulated forms for each county in England, for North and South Wales, and for Scotland.

The Board seemed satisfied with the substantial accuracy of the statements of their correspondents, and though bias may have appeared here and there in the letters, their general truth as to facts is not questioned in the opening analysis which the Board attached to the printed Report.

The picture that is there drawn of the state of agriculture is little short of appalling. More than half the correspondents tell of farms unoccupied by the tenants and thrown on the landlords' hands ; and in several instances large farms were uncultivated and going to waste.

¹ 'The Agricultural State of the Kingdom in February, March, and April 1816 ; Being the substance of the Replies of many of the most opulent and intelligent Landholders to a Circular Letter sent by the Board of Agriculture to every part of England, Wales, and Scotland.' London, 1816.

More than seventy-five per cent. of the correspondents tell of large numbers of farmers in their respective neighbourhoods who had given notice to quit their holdings at Lady Day 1816 or later. And this although, as the Board in a note points out :

‘ Until the present declension commenced, such an idea as giving notice to quit a farm, except for the purpose of hiring a better one, may be said to have been almost unknown in the kingdom ; and no circumstances can more clearly mark the present degradation of the employment than these notices.’

The fact was that, with the fall in prices and the retention of high war rents, and of heavy taxes, rates, and tithes, the land was overburdened, and farmers could not pay their way.

Nearly every return told of considerable abatements of rent, ranging from 10 to 40 per cent. In some cases landlords begged their tenants to retain their holdings free of all rent ; and in Norfolk it was said that the year’s rent of the county would all be lost.

Bankruptcies, seizures, executions, imprisonments figure in every second letter ; tithes and poor-rates were unpaid ; improvements of every kind were discontinued ; live stock were greatly lessened ; tradesmen’s Christmas bills could not be met.

In Lincolnshire they report ‘ a large portion of land recently broken up and burnt, not being worth cultivation.’ And with what feelings would Arthur Young—that optimistic advocate of enclosure, and of turning moors into arable—have heard a wail from Devonshire :

‘ The great enclosures taken from moors and commons are quietly resigned to their ancient possessors, the heath and the furze ; and vast sums expended improvidently in subjecting lands of very indifferent quality to cultivation are lost for ever.’

And what of those tenants—as in Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincoln, and Monmouth—who had *bought*, either from their savings or on borrowed capital, bad land ‘ at four times its value ’ while prices were high ?

For there was no help for them now from the country banks—then, of course, private enterprise, for joint-stock banks were not yet. Hitherto in those years of speculation and of mad competition for farms, as well as of honest husbandry, the banks had been friends. Landlords might have trebled the rents ; the farms might have been amalgamated and the small men crushed out ; a whole army of land parasites—agents, lawyers, valuers, stewards, surveyors,

cattle jobbers, corn speculators—might have arisen; but while prices were high, and a plentiful paper currency in use, the country banks had advanced money freely to the tenant holders. The correspondents consider that the very freedom of these advances in paper helped to force prices still higher, and that the paper currency compulsorily in use since the Bank Restriction of 1797, and excessively in use since 1807, had already inflated prices to an undreamt-of pitch. Corn had at one time been as high as 177s. the quarter, and the average for the five years 1809–13 was, according to Tooke's tables, founded on the Eton College Audit, 112s. 9d. and now in 1816 it was down to 52s. So scarce was gold that a prosperous Yorkshire baronet, Sir William Strickland, tells the Board that he has not seen a golden guinea for years, and, he adds, seldom a Bank of England bill.

Later, when the Bank Restriction was removed, an interminable controversy arose in Parliament and by pamphlets as to the supposed effect of paper currency on prices, and as to the alleged excessive paper after 1807, and its subsequent scarcity after 1815. Tooke, in his 'History of Prices,' thinks the farming and landed people were quite wrong in attributing any great variation of prices to this cause, and J. S. Mill agrees with him. The greatest cause was, Tooke considers, the variation of the seasons; he allows only a small effect to paper currency. It would indeed be true enough to the psychology of farmers for them to find a mysterious political rather than a familiar physical cause for their troubles!

Be that as it may, the country banks, it was said again and again in these letters, had proved treacherous friends to the farmer. Yet the banks had had much to justify their faith in the solidity of the farming interest. The war was long; the land was bountiful. The period of experimental agriculture, of which Arthur Young gives so vivid a description, had most fortunately come just before the war. The greatest and most beneficial change that English agriculture had seen for centuries, namely the substitution of turnips for bare fallows in the rotation of crops, had been introduced by Coke of Holkham and Townshend of Rainham about 1730. Its general adoption had been hastened by the enthusiastic advocacy of Young. The fifty years between 1730 and 1780 had seen great improvements both in tillage and in agricultural machinery. This spirit was intensified by the stimulus of high war prices, even though we may read occasionally of bad farming, as in Worcester, where light soils, valuable for sheep, had been exhausted by continual

hard tillage for corn. The assertion of Thorold Rogers, that little improvement, save the increased breadth of tillage, was made in agriculture during the war, is not borne out by these letters. In under-draining, for example, we read of great advances. Threshing machines were in general use. Writer after writer, as far removed as Norfolk, Scotland, Nottingham, or Stafford, bears witness to the progress made. How could it be otherwise? As a Norfolk correspondent put it:

'The fruitful results of spirited exertions and increased capitals (having now been applied for sixteen years to the improvement of land) were most evident in the abundant harvest of 1813, which era may be reckoned the zenith of high prices, from which period they have continued declining to this time. Before this epoch Buonaparte had lost the epithet of *invincible*; his extensive power had been repressed, and the *continental* system of exclusion was dissipated. The north of Germany, Pomerania, and Prussia lay open to speculators in corn, who, encouraged by former high prices, ventured on large contracts which, added to a redundant harvest at home, overcharged the English markets.'

This was accentuated by these imports being concentrated on London, which affecting, if not ruling, the prices of other markets, helped to force them down, although a Devonshire correspondent tells also of abundance of corn coming into the south of England from France in 1815, and being stored before the Corn Bill of that year was passed. This Corn Law of 1815 closed the ports to the importation of foreign corn till the price of wheat reached 80s. a quarter, but by the time it came into operation the crop of 1815 had been sold by the farmers.

No doubt these importations, the speculation in home and foreign corn before the Corn Act came into force, the cessation of the large Government purchases for the Army and Navy, all contributed to the low prices. But greater than any one of these causes—and greater, Tooke seems to think, than all of them—was the effect of the weather. The fact was that the harvest of 1813 had been one of the most bountiful on record, and as a result the price of corn fell rapidly towards the end of that year. The winter of 1813-14 was very severe, and the spring cold, so that the crop was bad, but the large surplus from 1813, added to the heavy importations on the close of hostilities, still kept prices down, and wheat stood at 65s. at Christmas 1814. Now the winter of 1814-15 was open, and the spring forward, and there was a bountiful harvest,

so that, despite the renewal of hostilities and the Corn Law of 1815, wheat went down to 53s. on the average, and as low as 42s. in some districts. At the same time there was a heavy fall in stock.

As prices fell, the country banks took alarm. It was rumoured, too, that the Bank Restriction on cash payment might be removed in 1816. It was believed that the paper currency had depreciated, and to prove it, one correspondent tells of Jews melting down guineas, and 'each after this transfusion produced at the rate of 26s. or 27s. in paper value.' The country banks called in their loans, and refused to discount any further bills. But it was too late to save themselves, and, with the honourable exception of Scotland, they shared in the ruin of 1816. In every second market town in England the banks failed. From an excess of paper, the country districts went suddenly to a deficiency. The 'magical effect' of an excess or defect of forced paper currency on prices is repeatedly invoked—however mistakenly—to account for the farmer's misfortunes. Prices, already falling, went down with a crash. In Lincolnshire alone it was reported—and the Board of Agriculture regarded it as no exaggeration—that $2\frac{1}{2}$ or 3 millions of paper money disappeared, and in Wiltshire the loss was put at £300,000.

Long and bitter are the complaints in these letters of the policy of the country banks. They had encouraged personal extravagance among the farmers by lending money too freely; they had encouraged foolish speculation in poor land that was for sale; they had encouraged competition for farms by lending poor tenants capital to enable them to take excessively large holdings.¹ This testimony is so unanimous that some of it must be true. 'The country banks,' wrote Mr. Maxwell from Huntingdonshire, 'have done all the mischief: they have encouraged the farmers to become speculators in land, and many other articles, instead of confining themselves, as formerly, to their proper occupation.' Having created a fictitious credit, their failure destroyed all credit for the time being. When the crash came, not only the farmers and labourers, but all the country folk suffered—the lawyers, the doctors, the carpenters, the blacksmiths, the tradesmen of the market towns. None of them could get their bills paid.

¹ Thus Mr. Robert H. Wyatt wrote from Staffordshire: 'The facility with which money was obtained from the country banks has enabled thousands with very little capital to compete with, and to supersede, men of adequate capital for the occupation of land, and has created a splendid but false show of opulence' (p. 292).

It is worth noticing that, in this matter of the country banks, history almost repeated itself after the Crimean War, as Thorold Rogers points out :

'From the end of the Crimean War to the final adjustment of Europe after the Franco-German War, the rent of land was greatly exalted. . . . It (*i.e.* the increase) amounted to $26\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in twenty years. . . . Now during this period of inflation banks in agricultural districts made very free advances to farmers. . . . At last the crisis came, rents began to fall, and farmers to be bankrupts. In two years 10 per cent. of the British farmers, taking the bankruptcy returns and the census together, were swept away by failure.'¹

It was the same story over again. The banks had made large advances. Then they took alarm and called in their advances, and ruin was the result. Once again they proved themselves treacherous friends to farmers.

Of course, some of the banks held their ground in 1815, and some of the farmers came through those evil days. Those who did survive were the exceptionally able and prudent men ; assuredly not those farmers of whom several correspondents tell, who 'lived up to the height of their income,' or who 'lived beyond their station in life.' Those tenants who had, too quickly, raised their standard of domestic life on the strength of their war gains, who had obtained larger farmhouses, who drank wine instead of beer, who put the oak in the kitchen, and bought mahogany for the parlour, who took their daughters from the dairy and sent them to the dancing-master, had a rude awakening in that awful winter of 1815-1816.

It may be asked, should the farmers have foreseen the fall in prices when peace came, and so saved their war profits for the evil day ? Why did they foolishly conclude that the causes of the high prices were permanent ? Could they not have recognised during the war that these were war prices ? The unexpected answer is, that if they were to judge by former wars, they could not have foreseen the fall.

'With these exceptions, it will appear,' writes Tooke ('History of Prices,' vol. i. p. 97) 'on reference to former periods of history, that there is no observable coincidence of a rise of price during war, and a fall during peace. *On the contrary, it so happens that in the case of the agricultural produce of the country, there was for upwards of a hundred years previous to 1793 as low a range of prices during*

¹ *Industrial and Commercial History of England*, p. 84.

periods of war as during periods of peace. The prices of meat and other provisions were as low in the periods of war as in those of peace, and in some instances lower. The price of wool would offer nearly the same result . . . nor do the wages of labour appear to have been in general higher during war than during the intervals of peace . . . the period of greatest cheapness in the whole term of 105 years, viz. the period between 1740 and 1748, is precisely that of an uninterrupted and very large war expenditure, defrayed chiefly by loans.'

The solution of the problem of the future of the labourer was thought to lie in a new Poor Law system, and several correspondents advocate allotments, and the keeping of cows by farm hands. A Durham correspondent had a bold scheme for small holdings and cottages on Crown lands for disbanded soldiers, coupled with an extensive plan of reafforesting. John Tuke of York—prescient man—wishes for an 'encouragement for articles for dyeing.' One writer deplores that even the ravages of war and small-pox did not prevent the population from unduly increasing!

Only two notices occur of attempts of labourers to keep up the standard of war wages in peace time—one from Suffolk and one from South Wales, where it is found 'difficult to lower the prices of wages much, though corn and other necessities are cheaper, because the workmen have altered their habits of life both as to food and clothing.' In Somerset, we are told,

'The poor are fast approaching in appearance and manner to what they were thirty years ago. They have already lost that honourable independence they for the last twenty years have enjoyed. Their starved countenances show their depressed condition.'

In fact, they reverted rapidly to pre-war conditions.

In the manufacturing neighbourhoods the agricultural labourers migrated to the towns where they could get work, as in the West Riding of Yorkshire, but the law of legal settlement made migration difficult.

Futile as it may seem to draw any comparison between agriculture at the close of the Napoleonic struggle and the outlook at the end of the present war, yet in many essential respects the character of the farmer and his labourer are much the same to-day as they were a hundred years ago.

The farmer, even though he has grown cautious, has not yet become a business man. His attention for some decades has been

too adroitly fixed upon one out of many of his business relationships—that to his landlord. Yet this relationship has gradually become so stable by legal enactment that the variable element in it has become almost negligible. Tenants' rights are already fully protected, and during the war, rents have generally remained unaltered, and cannot now be raised during the period of fixed prices, *i.e.* up to 1922, without the consent of the Board of Agriculture.

But there are other far more important relationships of the farmer—that to his labourers, to his salesmen, to his bank manager, to the Small Holdings Act, and to the scientific side of farming. It is a safe prophecy to make, that the labourer will never again work for a wage under £1 a week, and that he will demand and receive a cottage with three bedrooms if he is a married man with a family. Whoever provides this cottage, whether the State, local authority, or landlord and tenant, it will have to be found.

The one voice of every young agricultural labourer, home for ten days from the Front, is that he will be glad to get back to the country and to his own village, but never again without the prospect of a cottage and a living wage to marry on.

The fathers and mothers at home never weary of saying the same thing—when the lads come home they will not only never stand the old wages, but they will demand more cottages, so that they need not leave their village.

At the present moment it would probably be true to say that the bulk of the agricultural labourers with the colours intend to go back to the land—on conditions. A guarantee of wages up to 1922 and of a wages board afterwards is a very great step towards reassuring them, but the question of the cottage is just as important, for very many of them will want to marry at once after the war. If there are no cottages by the time these men are demobilised, they will inevitably drift into the towns and be lost for ever to the land. There is no question of the moment more important to the farmer than this—yet he is neglecting it, and is waiting for automatic economic pressure to give him plentiful labour as before. The wage is worthless without the house.

State small holdings under the Board of Agriculture will meet with very ingenious and steady resistance from the big farmer, the 'auctioneer, valuer, surveyor, and land-agent,' the small county solicitor, the country bank manager, *et hoc genus omne*, and they will no doubt carefully represent the resistance as coming from the landlord, yet a hundred thousand small holdings could, once the

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County Councils were eliminated or dominated, be created in a few years. With a few honourable exceptions, the County Councils are by general consent alone responsible for what can only be called the misadministration of the Small Holdings Act. But it will be well for the framers of the new policy of State Small Holdings to remember that too much coddling and cossetting of their small holders will frighten the *bona fide* agricultural labourer away. It will probably be found that if he is too insistently 'directed,' 'instructed,' and 'supervised,' he will throw the whole thing up in disgust from nervous irritation. But the scheme, as outlined by the Departmental Committee, is, on the whole, excellent, and many regret that more vigour is not being thrown into the carrying out of their recommendations. To endeavour to hang the scheme up on an *a priori* difference of opinion about ownership *versus* occupiership is to run a very grave risk.

The small-holding colonies will doubtless teach the big farmer many lessons he will be glad to learn—co-operative purchase of machinery and seeds, scientific cropping and manuring, credit banks, co-operative selling, the value of small agricultural shows. In a thousand ways the multiplication of these colonies will provide centres of light throughout the countryside. They will attract the pick of the agricultural labourers now with the colours, and provide a hopeful element of progress in backward districts.¹

What of the war profits from the land ?

The landlords are getting no extra rents, but what are the farmers doing with their extra profits ? Is the story of 1815-16 being repeated ? We may safely answer No.

The iron memory of the eighties and nineties has entered into the farmer's soul. He has, of course, made a bit and saved a bit. Some of it has gone in new machinery, some in the extra wages and extra prices for cake and seeds, some into the bank, and thence some of it into the War Loan. There has been no speculation in land, and very few indeed have bought their holdings. On the whole, the farmer has consolidated his position. He is ready for an advance—after the war.

He has not been over-zealous in breaking up old pasture as his forefathers were ; much, indeed, in that direction yet remains to

¹ As an illustration of what small holders can do, and how valuable an element they are in the community, it is worth mentioning that one village of three hundred people in the south midlands, well known for its small holders, sent up on one day from the village post office £800 to the War Loan, a sum which included nothing from farmers or richer people of the class who subscribed through their banks.

be done. But there is no inclination either to break up valuable old or very poor pasture. At the end of the war the land, owing to lack of labour, will be very foul, and owing to lack of manures will be much exhausted.

To-day the outlook in the rural districts for after the war is good—provided no time is lost, and that schemes for cottages and for small holdings are pushed ahead.

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SPINDRIFT.

BY F. E. BOYCE.

I AM no student of queer dreams or other mental vagaries, and so hardly know what to call the deliberate incursions that I make at will into the unfettered regions of my mind. But they appear to afford my friends amusement, and perhaps the examples I here offer may induce the contribution of others; for surely many people must possess the same faculty and be subject to the same sort of experience.

What happens in my case is this. I am quiet, but wide awake—it may be in bed, it may be in my chair by the fire—and, knowing perfectly who and where I am, I invite myself to dream. I banish thought and wait till some object or phrase presents itself to my inner vision or hearing, and then my dreaming self, from the opening so given, evolves a continuous story, while I watch, enter into the dream if I like, question the people in it, note their answers and actions, but do not exercise any sort of control over them. I inquire, observe, and register; I do *not* choose or direct. Afterwards I remember the whole thing with absolute clearness and write it down if it seems pleasing. Naturally the temptation then assails me to add or alter, but rather than so delude my readers I have in the instances that follow put down nothing but what *came* to me—what, without the slightest effort of will or thought on my part, entered and passed through my dreaming consciousness.

Indeed, it will be seen that these visions, though not so disjointed as the ordinary dream, are yet fragmentary and inconclusive, and that nothing would be easier than to touch them up. There are words I would fain add, elaborations that cry for insertion, but honesty withholds them.

The 'I' is of course my dreaming self. My waking, fully conscious self relishes the absurdities and starts at the utterly unexpected remarks as a bystander would.

I.

THE BUST OF SHAKESPEARE.

I was walking on the bank of the Avon opposite the famous church. It was a serene evening and the water mirrored a sky of tender blue in which the clouds were every minute rosier. The bust of Shakespeare had come out to take the air and was perched on the very summit of one of the elms that edge the churchyard bank. Suddenly this elm crashed down across the river, tearing a great gap in the wall of the embankment, and depositing the bust almost at my feet. I placed it on a bench and sat down beside it. Presently a very old, old woman, with a face apparently made of rough chunks of wood, seated herself on the other side of it, and regarded it with a hard stare. Then she took the bust and put it under her apron, and as she did so I knew it was Ann Hathaway, and that she was planning a theft.

'You mustn't take the bust,' I said to her: 'Stratford-on-Avon would never allow it.'

She gave me a sidelong glance, restored the bust to its place on the bench and shuffled off.

Then I, coveting so great a prize, took it in my arms and began to walk away with it. But it was terribly heavy and I had to set it down, whereupon in a series of high hops or jumps, it made for the Weir Brake. I hurried after it, calling out 'Willy, Willy, you mustn't do that!' But it bounded on with the utmost ease and rapidity, and I only came up with it after it had reached the wood and perched itself on a tree again—this time not a very high one. As I reached the spot, it looked down at me and asked quietly,

'And what do you think of my Othello?'

'Well, really, Willy, between ourselves,' I ventured to reply, 'wasn't he rather a fool?'

'All the best people necessarily are,' he answered shortly.

Encouraged by his deigning to answer me at all, I risked another question. 'Tell me,' I said eagerly, 'was Hamlet really mad?'

'I'd far rather you asked me how much I pay for my washing,' was the utterly unlooked-for reply.

'Why on earth do you say that?' I asked.

'Because I know what to answer,' he declared. 'I know I pay

twopence for this, and threepence for that, but I do *not* know whether Hamlet was mad or not. I didn't make him; he made himself, and I am not responsible.'

(Here the interview came to an abrupt end.)

II.

THE ROSE-TREE AND THE WATERING-CAN.

I saw a Watering-can left beside a Rose-tree, and its attitude was that of a humble adorer. The Rose-tree, leaning a little towards it, asked :

'And you, to what extent do you consider that this war is likely to affect me ?'

'Not at all,' answered the Watering-can, 'for you are an English rose and the Navy protects you.'

'Ah, but do you not believe that war might benefit the ground ?' said the Rose-tree.

'I don't know,' replied the Watering-can; 'you see I water with water, but the war waters with blood.'

'I wonder if a watering with blood would deepen the colour of my blooms ?' remarked the Rose-tree reflectively.

The Watering-can almost jumped.

'But—but it would be the blood of these children !' it cried aghast, and then I saw that the garden belonged to a school and that a number of girls were flitting about in light dresses. The Rose-tree, swaying gracefully in the breeze, glanced at them with callous indifference.

'Still, blood might have a strengthening effect on my roots,' it said quite calmly.

Whereupon the Watering-can fell over backwards, moaning because it could no longer adore.

III.

THE SILVER VASE.

A group of tall women, all in long mackintoshes, stood round something I could not at first see, but which, when they presently separated a little, I perceived to be a beautiful silver vase almost as tall as themselves. The base was round and large, and from

it sprang silver lilies, which in a graceful design clustered and drooped or stood erect round the stem.

The women wished to hide it and were trying to dig a hole deep enough. But they did not get on at all fast, and Johnny Walker, who suddenly appeared and walked up to them in his usual brisk, alert fashion, said sharply :

‘That is no use. A bomb from a Zepp would blow it to bits. You must put it in deep water.’

So we all moved to the seashore, and there among a stretch of rocks lay a calm, deep lagoon.

‘Drop it in there,’ said Johnny Walker, touching the water with his cane, and adjusting his eyeglass as he peered into it.

‘We must put our mackintoshes round it first,’ said the women, and they all took off their cloaks and wrapped them carefully round the vase, which they then solemnly let down into the clear water. The women were all beautiful, and I now saw that one of them was Britannia herself.

IV.

THE DARK HAND.

I was watching a tiny creature that hovered about a bank sloping down to a narrow river. Was it a butterfly? No,—looking more closely I saw the tiny white limbs of a child, not bigger than my little finger. It had delicate blue diaphanous wings and a filmy blue drapery clung round, without hiding, its exquisite little body. As it moved, a great dark hand clutched and clutched at it, but always missed it. The terror that presently it would not miss, and that the lovely little being would be crushed, made me feel cold and wretched. Many trees grew on the bank, and presently the child, growing smaller still, hung in a spider’s web under a long branch. There it swung idly for a while,—the hand apparently unable to get at it,—then it slid along under the branch, which overhung the stream, and dropped into a little boat below. Nothing prettier could be imagined than the tiny white, blue-winged child resting lazily in the drifting nutshell of a boat—a kind of Canadian canoe—that just held it. I followed along the bank, and looked at it inquiringly.

‘You were in great danger,’ I said.

The child shook its head, and a ripple as of laughter went

through the little body, so that the blue wings and filmy draperies quivered.

'Don't you know me?' it asked mischievously.

I confessed my ignorance, and again a ripple of laughter stirred the blue draperies.

'I'm Cupid,' it said, with a delicious sauciness.

'But the dark hand that clutched at you—whose was that?' I asked.

Cupid wrapped his wings lazily round him.

'Oh, that was only the Devil. He's always trying to catch me, but he never can and never will!' Then the boat sped away, but Cupid looked back and called out to me:

'Can I do anything for you?'

V.

LIKE ALL MOTHERS.

'What on the spur of the moment do you propose to do?' a young goose asked her mother, when they came to a patch on the moor worked into mud by the trampling of soldiers. She was rather an impertinent goose, and even in her waddle there was an independent wiggle which her mother greatly admired.

'I suppose I shall have to fly,' said the old goose, but she spoke plaintively, for it was very near Michaelmas, and she was more than plump.

'I shouldn't advise you to do that,' said her daughter, 'for if you fall in the mud, the last state of that goose will be worse than the first.'

So saying, she soared up and away over the mud. She had another year in training before she went to the front.

The mother was nettled. 'After all it isn't so long since I flew over a hedge to avoid a boy who was chasing me,' she thought. So up she went and flop she came down, and up she went and flop she came down, and up she went and flop she came down, and up she—

'Excuse me, but are you under a written agreement to make this story last two hours?' my registering mind asked my dreaming mind.

And up she went and flop she came down, continued the dream, quite regardless of my impatience.

But at last the old goose got over, and then she merely turned to me and said 'Did you notice how beautifully my daughter flew over? She is a most remarkable bird.'

'But what became of her?' I asked.

'Oh, she got on all right—that sort of person always does,' answered some one, but of course it was not the mother.

VI.

A NEW WORLD.

From a great thundercloud, black and full of menace, on the horizon, an enormous mass of fire sped on a straight course towards me. It blazed more fiercely every second, and I, standing spell-bound and unable to move, feared annihilation. But eventually it touched earth on some labourers' allotments close at hand. I now saw that it was a perfect cube in shape—about four feet each way—white hot and brilliant. An old labourer with a scythe approached it, but only to have his hand burnt.

Then four spirits, very tall and of silvery transparency, took up their places at the corners, as though on guard. They touched the cube without receiving any hurt, and occasionally opened the top, which I now saw to be a lid.

'It is nearly ready,' said one, and then there was a terrific crash, the white-hot box burst, and out sailed a perfect globe, incandescent and spinning.

I drew nearer and asked with emotion 'What is it?'

'A New World,' answered one of the spirits gravely, and with me and the other spirits, it turned to watch the globe as it soared upwards, increasing rapidly in size.

'Will there be Prussians in it?' I asked, but no answer came.

VII.

THE MAD VIOLINIST.

A violinist—a dark foreigner of forbidding aspect, with long black whiskers and gleaming eyes—stood on the platform of the old St. James' Hall, playing a wild and discordant rhapsody.

Suddenly I saw him leap into the hall, and begin laying about him with his violin, aiming at the heads and shoulders of the

auditors, who rose and became a confused mob. But some one in authority seized the musician, and pinning his arms together from behind, accused him of being mad.

'Of course I am mad,' he cried, 'and I'll tell you why I am mad.'

Then all the people crowded round him in a circle and made ready to listen. He mounted on a chair among them, and spoke in a loud, vibrating voice.

'At eight years old, I was an infant prodigy,' he said. 'There was no violin music I could not play and my genius attracted the attention of the whole world. One day I had to play before the Kaiser, and he was so much pleased that he sent for my mother, and told her he would bear the expenses for the future of my musical education. "Your boy shall learn with the Crown Prince," he said, "and he must always play well enough to spur the Prince on, but never so well as to discourage him."

"But what if the Prince easily surpasses him?" asked my mother, who was an adroit woman and understood royalty.

"That will not be," said the Kaiser oracularly.

'And so,' continued the violinist vehemently, 'I was doomed to play for years listening to the caterwauling of the imbecile Prince! Can you wonder I am mad?'

And then the hall filled with cats:—cats in the arena, cats in the orchestra, cats in the galleries, on the walls, on the ceiling,—cats everywhere, all caterwauling. And again the violinist snatched up his violin and hit out with it in all directions.

VIII.

THE BLACK PRINCE.

I found myself present at the summer sports of a big public school, and saw a boy of about seventeen make a tremendous pole jump. He came down lightly and was instantly surrounded by his chums, who applauded and congratulated him and bore him off on their shoulders to a river hard by. It did not strike me as the least wrong or unwise when, with several others, he plunged in and had a long swim.

Then I saw him, still in the midst of a cheery, enthusiastic mob, go into hall and have a hearty meal. I remember the long table and the lines of boys' heads craning forward to keep him in view.

But by now I was aware that over the slender, erect young figure there hovered all the while something black. Gradually it took the shape of a large black bird, and gradually, too, it drew closer to him and almost touched his head.

Next the boy was being congratulated, in a private library, by the headmaster, whose little, fair-haired girl, of about seven years of age, clung fast to the young champion's knees, and put her arms up to try and pull his head down to hers.

As he stood playing with the child, the black bird descended and slowly enfolded him, till he stood sheathed in black plumes, the bird's beak projecting above his forehead. The little one looked up at him, and the wonder in her eyes changed to understanding.

'You are my Black Prince!' she cried delightedly, and laying her cheek against the plumes: 'My Black Prince, my Black Prince!'

She wore a soft white frock, with a suggestion of blue showing through it, and as, in the sunlight, she flung herself against her hero, it made a charming picture, still vivid in my memory.

The boy's face was now graver, and from a look that he gave the headmaster, I realised that he was going to the front. The child knew it too and to her it was all a fairy tale. 'When you are wounded,' she said, 'I shall come out and be your nurse, and then you'll get well and marry me.'

'Of course,' said the boy laughing gaily.

A pause, and the scene changed. The child was with me, and together we were searching Europe for the boy, unable to find him. We went to France, to Salonika, to Egypt, to Mesopotamia, then back to France. And there, as we stood in a great, desolate waste of shell-pocked ground, among the roar of guns, and the hissing of bullets, an aeroplane, flying very low, passed quite near us, and in it sat our Black Prince. The child recognised him in a moment and waved to him with frantic joy; he leant forward and waved as eagerly to her. Then he flew upwards and entered a cloud which hid him from our sight. But the child watched and watched, and presently, stretching up her little arms with a passionate gesture of longing and despair, she cried: 'The angels have taken him! I saw two white angels lift him out of the airplane, and take him away. I want him back,—oh, I want him back!'

And almost immediately an aeroplane in flames came crashing to the ground. People ran up, and I heard them say 'There is no body here,—it must have fallen elsewhere.'

IX.

FRUIT-TREES.

I was in an orchard in spring, and round me fruit-trees, great and small, were laden with scented blossom. Some were old, with gnarled trunks and hoary boughs,—others slender and young, yet bearing gallantly a wealth of white and rose, full of promise and good cheer. I passed in and out among them, and presently became aware that on the trunk of one of the largest and finest trees something was stirring. Looking closer I saw a great serpent coiled round it and gripping it hard,—the head, like that of a cobra, lifted high among the topmost branches. Erect and menacing, it darted out a hissing tongue. And then, shuddering, I saw that several of the trunks were similarly entwisted by serpents, and that the clutch of the constricting folds seemed in some cases to support and strengthen the tree, but in most to be slowly crushing it to death. Where there was no serpent the trees were not so straight, but of freer, more varied growth.

As I wondered, I saw a newcomer enter the orchard,—a rough khaki-clad boy, whistling 'Tipperary' and making gaily with a spear for the biggest serpent.

'Will you do for it, George?' I asked, for of course I knew it was St. George.

'You're a rum old bloke,' he said, 'a bit nutty, ain't you? My name's Tommy!'

'Are you going for all the serpents?' I asked; 'and if not, for which?'

'Let's kill the big 'un first, and we'll see about the others,' he answered, and changing his tune to 'Keep the 'ome fires burning,' he continued to slash at the monster.

AFTER YPRES.

THE RECORD OF A SOUTHERN JOURNEY.

BY AN OFFICER.

THE news came one breezy summer's afternoon, and it came direct from Divisional Headquarters. The groups standing and lying about on the canal bank got it first; then, like greased lightning, it flashed down the Yperlee and reached the innermost recesses of every dug-out, and was even conveyed to the newly brought-in wounded who were lying in the dressing-station dug-outs. Near Bridge 4 it collected a crowd; at Blighty Bridge quite a number were discussing it half an hour after the first whisper had got abroad. By nightfall it had crept uncannily along the three-quarters of a mile of communication trenches to the front line: it travelled faster than any gas-wave. The only people who knew nothing of it were the three canvas-shrouded figures lying side by side on stretchers in a *cul-de-sac*, looking like so many mummies. And they would never know.

'The division is moving south!'

The news flew from mouth to mouth, and everybody congratulated everybody else. Everybody's heart leapt for joy that breezy July day because the dead weight of doom was lifted from their souls. The salient was to be left behind, with its brown ditches, its impotence for the defenders, and—its implacable Fate. No more sitting still and suffering. There would be a pause, at any rate, in the slow procession of the maimed, the dying, and the dead. There would be a change of country, of scenery, of air, of habits. There would be a long journey, long marching, gorgeous rests in remote places, quiet nights and still, lazy days, and a breath of Peace—and of Life. And at the end—who knows? Nothing worse than a battlefield on which you *fight* and live or die as men should, not lie in a ditch and wait for the inevitable end like dogs. Give us the first a thousand times! Make no mistake—Ypres gets on the nerves.

The day came. A still, misty morning resolved itself into brilliant sunshine and great heat. And as the first train left the railway siding near the old Poperinghe road, cheer upon cheer went

up to the blue sky. It was the men's farewell to Yperz, as they called it. 'To the south!' They knew that they were going into action—perhaps in a few days, perhaps in a few weeks—but this mattered not a cuss: there was nothing but singing, laughter, and shouting to-day. For with every mile the hated salient, the treacherous canal bank, the death-stricken city were left farther and farther behind . . . The train rolled on. Its rhythm, its regular 'clank-clank-clank' burst into the great heat. By ten o'clock a broiling sun poured down its rays upon the young oak-woods beyond Proven, upon the flat fields and vegetable gardens and the fruit-laden orchards, upon the white highways whence clouds of dust rose. By road and rail to-day the relieving corps was moving up to Ypres. For many leagues—as far, say, as Wormhoudt—the railway line ran beside the road and that road carried unending columns of perspiring, khaki-clad troops, unending lines of horse transport and motor lorries, unending columns of artillery—moving north. And they had come from the Somme, these dusty, heat-stricken warriors—at least thousands were left behind, and so many thousands were fresh from England—where they had been decimated. They were coming up here—for a rest! . . . God help 'em.

Wormhoudt was left behind, and with it the northward-bending army. One had a glimpse of three white roads converging on a wide, sun-baked square, which was full of troops. It reminded one of an Italian piazza, this Wormhoudt, where we had passed a showery fortnight in June. You could not quite see the old billets, the Flemish farm amid green, flat fields, with its heavy cows and brawling family of children that had seemed a Paradise then; but now the Hill of Cassel came into view, and northward a wide vista of the Pas de Calais. A great undulating expanse of green fields and groups of trees and farms and cottages bounded sharply by a semi-circular rim and beyond this the blue ribbon of the Channel. At the edge of it, many miles away, a group of red-brick buildings surmounted by tall chimneys and a slight haze of smoke above that, was Calais. And Gravelines was not far away, another little cluster of houses and chimneys right on the verge of the sea.

It was wonderful, this panorama, wonderful to those who had seen nothing more spacious than Ypres viewed from the salient on a clear day.

The detraining point had an unpronounceable name; it was also insignificant, being a mere sun-baked, sleepy railway yard

without a square inch of shade. But here, for the first time there was no sign of war. For the first time in many months one seemed to leave the war behind, and as we marched out into the country—a merry, chaffing, laughing column of schoolboys—no stench of motor-lorries and petrol or swarms of troops greeted us, but only the heavy silence of the woods and fields and villages, dreaming away their midday rest. A yellow cat strolled across the village street, dogs lay basking outside the unsubstantial-looking inns—peculiar-looking dogs and very sleepy. Barely could they raise the energy to wag a tail at the flies which everywhere buzzed and hummed, creating with the drowsy heat an indescribable languor and murmur of summer. We halted in a shady oak-wood, and the men, recklessly happy, threw themselves down amid the long grass, the convolvuli, the straying honeysuckle. Yes, they were happy now, these who had suffered much! It was good to watch them. In the drowsy hum of summer, in the measured beat of the greenfinch's song and the 'ting-ting-ting' of the yellow-hammer, in the far-wistful cry of the soaring kestrel, in the quiet, mysterious woods and the sun-dappled, mossy earth, in the poetry of the long white roads, in the glimpse of great distances fading towards mist and sea, in the 'chop, chop,' of the wood-cutter and the deep contrasting silence of the country, there was found a hidden balm for all these war-weary souls.

And so at two of the afternoon, smoking, singing, and dust-covered, they marched into billets. Everybody's thought was, God grant we stay here a while! For it was a lovely little village, like enough to those that you will find in Devonshire or Dorset or those that you will commonly find in France, with its old-fashioned thatched farmsteads and its cottages covered, many of them, with creeper, honeysuckle, and clambering roses. And what an agreeable old lady—old, very old, and small and wrinkled—who comes to the door of her cottage and welcomes you—yes, actually welcomes you! 'Here is your bedroom, M'sieu. And would M'sieu like sheets? And would he, perhaps, like a cup of coffee after the long stroll?' She shows you a clean, sweet-smelling room opening out of the little parlour; its wide French windows looking on to a pleasant little vegetable and flower garden with box-borders and a box-arbour in the corner. Beyond that the fields and next to it other shady gardens, full of scents, hollyhocks, late roses, and ripening fruit.

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strikingly pretty village, for, after all, the country around was rather flat and ordinary, neither were there any striking features in the landscape except the Hill of Cassel. But what is that to us, who for six weary months have seen little but the sombre, shell-scarred world of the salient? So it became a Garden of Eden, a reincarnation, the haunt of a dream, Elysium, Paradise.

That afternoon the company was paid in the farmyard, and later, towards evening, we took books and a deck-chair—hero of many vicissitudes this, and survivor of all!—out into the box-arbour and abandoned ourselves to the dreamy stillness which steals over country places towards evening. We dozed. The air was full of gentle sounds, alluring, restful: the drowsy hum of insects, the rippling notes of birds, of wrens, warblers, finches, the ‘roo-coo-coo’ of a wood pigeon in elms near the church, the ‘purr-r-r’ of stock-doves, and presently the pleasant sound of an evening church bell.

Within the cottage Madame, our hostess, could be seen entertaining an aged friend to coffee and rolls. They were chatting animatedly together while knitting. Thus one gained an insight into this queer little backwater of life, self-contained, untouched, unmoved by the war, a thing apart from blood and death. There were the men in worn and faded khaki—half stripped, some of them—lying smoking, or sleeping against the sunny wall. It was the hour when at home the cattle meander down to the waterside to cool their blistered legs in the shallows, when rooks come sailing homeward strung out in a long line against the sunset sky, when the great cart-horses clank into the farmyard laden with laughing children.

There had been no troops in the village for nearly twelve months. That was why it was different from the other villages of this war-stricken country. Like ships that pass in the night, the soldiers came, stayed two brief days, and left behind ever so regretfully the first stage of the southward journey.

The battalion marched at dawn—a summery dawn that was shrouded in mists which presaged further great heat. Yesterday had been spent practically in idleness and resting, for the troops dozed away the hot middle hours, and only in the cool of the evening walked out into the country, watched the peasants working in the fields, strolled about, and looked at the gay village gardens.

By nine o'clock we were on the road again with a thirteen-mile march before us, and a long railway journey at the end. It was

hoped to finish the march before the sun got up. Nobody minded the early hour, for the moist blue mists which blotted out the countryside and cloaked mysteriously the woods and fields were cool and delicious. Everybody felt fit, there was much laughing and singing as the battalion swung along the dusty road. We passed through villages—old-fashioned and sweet-scented like the one just left—whose farms and cottages and inhabitants were yet asleep. Only an occasional farm-boy, milk-pail in hand, would come to the gate to see the long columns go by. But as the morning advanced and shafts of sunlight began to peep through the mists, people appeared at the gates of their cottages, at the cross-roads, and in groups and little family parties on their way to early church; which latter was the first intimation one had that it was Sunday, for in the vagrant stirring life of movement, the days passed by almost uncounted. The halts were delightful, and more so as the noontide heat crept on; by the side of woods, shady and cool, on the edge of cornfields in lush grass, cornflower-starred and scarlet-splashed with poppies, on the village greens where the geese and turkeys wandered and the children gathered round, wide-eyed and curious. Out of the mists there peeped presently, now quite close, an ever-beckoning landmark, the Hill of Cassel, with its grey, old-world houses grouped on the summit. Thence you may see on a clear day Ypres and the dreadful Pilckem Ridge on the one side, on the other the sea about Nieuport almost to Ostend, and the ships in harbour at Dunkirk, and away to the south, Armentières and Merville and the dim Forest of Nieppe, westward the quiet villages of the Pas de Calais as far as that city itself.

We halted at the foot of the hill in fields close to the railway station. There was to be a three hours' rest in the heat of the day before entraining. The men ate their dinners—which had been cooking on the march—under the shade of some majestic elms, and as for the officers, a fine spread awaited them (previously arranged by a thoughtful Quartermaster) at the farmhouse near by. This was followed by a smoke and a sleep, after which, the hour being about one o'clock, it was time to entrain. Cassel shimmered in the heat-haze; the sun scorched down upon a station-yard ankle-deep in dust. Two long trains stood in sidings, the engines with steam up; part of the brigade had already gone on ahead. Here was to be seen a group of Staff officers—'red-caps,' as the men call them—there a couple of gendarmes in black, silver-braided uniforms and a few French railway officials in sky-blue. Once all the men were aboard,

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there was no waiting, and the train started on its sixty-mile journey at a good speed.

And what a perspiring, jolting, stifling journey it was! Rather it reminded you of going home from school for the summer holidays. When the train stopped, as it occasionally did, there was no sound but the singing heat, and you listened for the familiar clatter of milk-cans, which is a thing inseparable from hot days at wayside country stations. But no such sounds came. Only the countryside, from being flat and ordinary at first, grew more and more Arcadian after you had passed through the tract of coal-mines and slag-heaps near Bethune and not far from Loos. After that, in the neighbourhood of St. Pol came hills richly crowned with soft green woods, valleys and deep combes tumbling into one another, and full green hedgerows, and farmsteads and villages and grey or reddish lichen-grown church steeples peeping out from the dense foliage of trees. To eyes wearied by ineffable flatness and desolation, such scenes appeared beautiful as Devonshire itself. Indeed any country would have looked beautiful on so perfect a summer's day.

The train ran through quickly, there were few stoppages, and in the late afternoon the detraining point was reached at a small and apparently remote country town. Anyway, it was a considerable distance from the front. In the centre of the town, and near the railway station, on a grassy open space well shaded by elms, the men piled arms and had tea, while the officers found a repast waiting at the station buffet. There were boiled eggs and cold tinned salmon and salad, and coffee and rolls *ad lib.*, and jam and honey and excellent omelette and light beer—what more could the heart of man desire? Evidently troops had not passed through here in any great numbers.

Half a dozen stretchers in a row on the station platform, bearing recently wounded men, and a certain number of Red Cross Ambulances arriving and departing, were the only signs that a battle was raging barely fifteen miles away. Otherwise the typical little French provincial town appeared as peaceful as any other place of the same kind in normal times. There were the bourgeois taking their Sunday evening stroll on the central boulevard, stopping and gazing with a mild interest at the resting troops. There were the precocious French youths, with their vari-coloured bow-ties, their rakishly perched soft hats, and their canes carried in the hand, strutting about in parties, ogling the hatless girls, laughing, sport-

ing, and showing off. Those who were not gathered in the boulevard were standing about chatting or playing leap-frog outside their houses.

When, soon after six o'clock, the battalion fell in and marched out with bagpipes playing, there was naturally much excitement and gesticulation, for few of the local population had ever seen or heard the pipes before. A fourteen-mile march lay ahead, and the first lap of a gradient three miles long was the most trying part of it. Away in front, poplar-lined and straight as a ruler, the broad white road climbed ever and ever upwards. Sometimes it was obscured by clouds of chalky dust, sometimes it simply disappeared over the rim of the horizon into that golden land where the sun would presently set. Looking backward, one saw the little town which we had left an hour ago lying picturesquely in a dip of the hills, the blue smoke of its chimneys rising in a gentle haze.

What a different country, this, from the flat, closely cultivated small holdings of Belgium! Rolling hills, crowned with woodland and scored with high leafy hedgerows, stretched away into distances infinitely dim and blue. It was God's own country that night. Not less wonderful because of the harvest which, more forward here than farther north, was strewn about the hillside fields and valleys in a wealth of stooks and sheaves. The reaper had done his work: the corn was cut and awaited carrying. Evening stole on, the rooks rose from the fields and wended their homeward way; from the grey village churches, hidden in combs and clefts, came the sound of bells. In this late summer scene there could be found no jarring note, but as the long, snake-like column mounted the last rise you divined a panoramic study in blue and gold untouched, unsullied by a hint of war. Blue sky, blue mists, blue distances, and greenish-blue tinge on the woods, and golden sunbeams sloping across the yellow stubble kindling to a ruddy gold the wheat and oats.

At the start the march was noisy and boisterous, with the usual amount of laughter and singing, but after the first halt the men (who had already done fifteen miles) settled down to their work. It would take every man's utmost strength and determination to reach his journey's end. So, as evening fell and four miles of the journey had been covered, there was no more shouting and laughter, but the column tramped on in a silence that was almost grim. We passed through a large village with a long, broad, grass-bordered street, consisting of rather foolish-looking white-

and-blue painted houses. The place was full of troops; another brigade had marched in only a few hours earlier. Beyond the village there stretched a great forest, which seemed to cover the surrounding hills.

When we entered the forest the sun had barely set, but under the great oak and beech trees, whose foliage arched over the road, forming seemingly an endless tunnel, night had already fallen. It was almost pitch-dark, and when after a mile or two we emerged, twilight had descended upon the world, and you could barely distinguish the hillside opposite. Here a halt was made, and it was pleasant to rest upon the bank in the cool dusk, watching the last embers of a gorgeous sunset die out of the sky. Close at hand, on the edge of the forest, no sound could be heard but the ceaseless chirruping of grasshoppers and crickets, the occasional croaking of a bull-frog in some distant pool, and the 'whoo-twhoo-who-who' of an owl coming from the depths of the woods. Not far off was a railway, and the one lone lamp which stared out of the middle distance and the occasional whistle of an engine only served to emphasise the remoteness and solitude of the place.

Now it was completely dark, a thousand summery scents rose from the earth, the sky was bejewelled with stars, low down on the horizon a golden-coppery harvest moon, not yet at the full, sailed into the heavens. The night was indescribably contemplative; many and strange thoughts came to the mind. It is from this, this pageant of peace and plenty and beauty, that one goes into the bloody nightmare of battlefields. . . . What do the stars say, those stars so wise, so inscrutable? What do they say to each man who in such quiet moments asks himself whether, after all, this is not the end—of a life. Of how many lives? for many must travel the same road before the trees have lost their leaves. Nor do such thoughts bring with them forebodings or any 'sadness of farewell,' for in England are left behind the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the joys, the longings or regrets that make up the sum total of Existence and of Time. In France men think calmly of Death as of a thing ordained, knowing that it is ever near, knowing that for many the end of the road is their journey's end, not dreading or even allowing themselves to fear until the supreme moment comes, but ever wondering . . . and wondering.

Towards the middle of the night the men grew tired—so tired that they could scarcely stumble onward in their fours. After many months in the trenches they had marched close on thirty miles

in one day, and the effort was proving almost too great. But not a complaint was heard. At intervals of a mile or so, a footsore or utterly exhausted soldier sank down by the roadside and had to be carried the last lap on a transport waggon. He murmured 'I can't get any farther.' However, the end of the march was near, and now the head of the column, after passing through a village which seemed to climb steeply a hillside, turned into an ink-black wood. Wooden huts were found, in which the men threw themselves down on bare boards without a word, and near by there was a farmhouse with courtyard and barn. After a cold repast quickly produced from the officers' mess-cart, we lay down thankfully to sleep, some in the living-room of the farmhouse, some on the floor of the barn.

Already the birds were awaking, and there was that deliciously fresh feeling in the air which comes just before dawn in summer. Already the cool grey light had begun to peep in through the open doors and windows of the barn.

That barn! It was a place of unknown horrors which in due course the glaring midday sunshine revealed. Black-beetles were crawling everywhere—black-beetles that fell from the wooden partition, black-beetles that crawled into and out of and under one's sleeping-bag and—yes, over one's prostrate body; black-beetles that did company or battalion drill upon the floor under one's very nose. Hastily we fled the place, and next night slept in the farmhouse itself, but the memory of that rude awakening will long remain.

The farmhouse was a queer ramshackle, untidy place, overrun with poultry, overgrown with weeds. It could not have been tended since the outbreak of war. Not less queer and untidy and dishevelled-looking were the tenants, a couple of frowsy old women and slatternly-looking girls, together with a smaller and numerous family. The men were apparently away; the old women quarrelled with frenzied shrieks and abuse like London street cats. The country around, one could see, was glorious, and in the village were many pleasant cottages, but the day after the march was too hot and one felt too languid to wander far. The only thing to do was to sit out in the deck chairs or read in the shadiest part of the orchard.

At dawn of the following morning another move was made through clinging mists which by eight o'clock had melted into scorching sunshine. On every hand one observed the glory of the

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harvest—the corn cut and standing in sheaves on the hillsides which sloped richly down to the valleys from their wooded summits. Among the corn-stooks flitted flocks of finches, sparrows, and linnets; the yellow-hammers and the crickets vied with each other in the beating out of an endlessly monotonous tune by the roadside. Overhead an unclouded blue sky—all the blue and gold and greenery of the year seemed to be concentrated in these early autumn days.

Of course the roads were ankle-deep in white dust; of course the distances were often very long and straight, and there was not always shade to be found at the halts. Already Ypres was forgotten, while the battle still seemed far away, and the war yet farther, so that there was the usual shouting and singing, and all marched well to the cheerful strains of the bagpipes. The villages, lying deep down in the trough of the valleys, looked curiously and utterly asleep. The inevitable dog slept head on paws, in the middle of the road, the inevitable cat basked on a sunny window-sill or wall; at their cottage doors old women, with wrinkled yellow faces peering out of white linen sun-bonnets, might often be espied sewing. Somewhere, as one passed, the blacksmith could be heard beating out the sultry minutes on his anvil. Nobody troubled to come to the roadside to see the soldiers pass, for doubtless many thousands had tramped that way since the great southward movement of troops began.

And at the end of the march there was a 'kit-strafe.' Well—there would be on the hottest day in the whole year. All the officers' sacks and valises were hurled remorselessly down on the roadside in the middle of the camp, and the second in command went through them one by one. There was no ceremony—your hair-oil newly arrived from England was sent spinning across to join a patent wash-hand stand, some books, some underclothes, a collapsible bed, a collapsible bath, and—the deck-chair. That chair, which had survived many marches, the rigours of Ypres, innumerable moves, substitutes, and evasions, and been the occasion of the most elaborate stratagems, was now solemnly sentenced to die an early death. 'Folding chairs will not in future be included in officers' kit'—so ran the order. A chorus of protests was of no avail—the chairs were condemned not less than the hair-oil and the underclothes, and thereafter everybody was reduced to sitting on sugar-boxes or on roughly knocked-up forms.

The camp, where we were destined to stay nearly a month, was

deep-hidden in one of those young oak-woods which abound thereabouts. Situated on the top of a hill, it was shady and cool, and, although there were wooden huts sufficient to accommodate all, everybody preferred to sleep out of doors while the fine weather lasted, which was practically the whole time. Not many hours had been spent here before there came the first reminder of war since leaving Ypres. A German aeroplane, white and silvery in the sunshine, was observed travelling rapidly and very high up, pursued across the blue expanse of sky by three or four British planes. At night the thunder of the guns seemed to come very close, and going to the eastern edge of the wood, you could see a great shimmering in the southern sky to show where the battle raged.

These last three weeks, quietly spent amid the rich peace of autumn behind the front, were a time of unsullied enjoyment. All knew that the storm was at hand, and in their secret hearts pondered deeply about the future. But none spoke of that, and none gave way to forebodings, which sometimes, when the roll and thunder of the guns made sleep almost impossible, and their great flickering lit up the whole night sky, came very near. There were moments, it is true, of doubt, of reflection, even of dread. Sometimes the sheer inevitableness of it all would appal one. Then, again, you simply could not visualise the proximity of fearful things. Away out there beyond the eastern horizon the storm muttered, but here were peace, sunshine, and rest.

The mellow silence of that early autumn entered into men's souls. And the plains of Picardy are very fair at harvest-time. There would be parades, marches, practice attacks, drill, physical drill, bayonet-fighting, schemes in the early morning, then the day's work was finished, and the men lay about in their shady wood all afternoon dozing or reading, while when evening came they would take country walks, assist the peasants in the harvest-fields, or get up a game of football. Thus they dreamed away their days, for was not this to be a time of rest?

One morning a party of Staff officers came unexpectedly round the camp, resplendent in gold lace, red caps, and blue or red-and-white armlets. The guard turned out—one face seemed especially familiar, and everybody stood to attention. It was the King.

Of an evening or afternoon there would be glorious rides to quaint hidden places far back in the country. There would be motor drives too, and these reminded you of the days when France was a pleasure-ground instead of, as now, the battlefield of the world.

One of the most favoured spots was Henancourt—a place chockful of troops, it is true, but distinguished by a magnificent eighteenth-century château, standing majestically at the head of a wide sloping village street. You confronted a spacious forecourt entered by finely wrought iron gates. One wing had been burnt down by the agency of some careless soldier, but apart from the unsightly and blackened windows and roof, the symmetry of the great house had not been spoilt. The handsome stone portico, steps, and doorway were there; so was the spacious hall, white-painted, with main staircase branching half-way into two flights. The state rooms were, I suppose, as they had always been, splendidly proportioned, with parquet floors, panelled walls of yellow brocade, and magnificent glass chandeliers. In one room—occupied perhaps by some Staff officer or by orderlies—you would find a grand piano; in another, exquisite Louis Quatorze cabinets and writing-tables, albeit most of the furniture had been removed. Upstairs Madame la Comtesse still dwelt—handsome and charming, it was said—the owner of the estate, who would not leave it except for an occasional visit to Paris to see her children. M. le Comte was away at the war.

Behind the château slumbered stately French and Italian gardens—much neglected, it is true—fruit and vegetable gardens once rich in produce, a home farm, a few paddocks, and beyond these vast woodlands, flower-strewn and steeped in silence, with grassy rides running through them and moss-grown statues gazing at each other from end to end.

By horseback, the forest of Lucheux could be reached, and of all the fascinating places in that richly endowed country, this was the most attractive. To reach it one rode through the provincial town of Doullens, which is surrounded by vast ancient earthwork defences, for the place is old in the history of France. And here one would stop for an excellent luncheon or dinner at the inn, while most things were to be bought at the shops, especially delicious chocolates and provisions of all kinds. It was amusing, too, to study the very provincial, civilian life of the place. Then one rode on four miles or so through a lush country, where water-meadows bordered a gently flowing stream to which eventually the forest tumbles steeply down as you enter Lucheux. This latter is a crooked, straggling village of old-fashioned, thatched cottages lying in a basin of the hills beneath overhanging woods. We did not pause here long, but climbed the steep hill towards the forest

and hit upon a track which leads right through it. On the very edge of the vast woodland, overlooking from a sort of promontory a wide stretch of rolling country, we found the Château de Lucheux, the property, it is said, of the Duc de Ligne. You entered the courtyard by a massive archway, and were immediately struck by the utter and complete silence of the place. There stood the castle, not large, but very old, built of grey stone and surmounted by a square tower. It looked fairly well kept, and one could see a vista of gardens hanging on the hillside beyond; but never a sign of human life, never a sound. On three sides it was shut in by the woods, which encroached upon the very edge of the forecourt. Perhaps these were responsible for the feeling of melancholy, for the impression of loneliness and unbroken solitude with which one left the place. Nor as one turned away into the forest did this feeling evaporate. Here, at any rate, the war had no power; it was as nothing in the great, solemn world of the beech-trees and oaks, in the dim arched aisles which looked so like cathedral naves. Silence in the deeps of the forest, silence and dappled sunbeams falling through the fronds of the nut-bushes upon the mossy floor. A green woodpecker flew laughing away among the trees, a jay shrieked in alarm, a wood-pigeon poured out to the evening wonderful notes; somewhere remote in forest glades the 'pick-pick' of a woodcutter's axe might be heard. Far above, the soaring kestrel cried—one of the commonest sounds of Picardy plains.

Grassy rides, Arcadian by-paths, and roads traversed the forest; there were bosky unexpected glades, and on the outskirts cornfields and little pastures where cows grazed practically hemmed in by the woods. In these far rambles you longed to meet a party of the wild boars which roam the forest but are seldom seen. Human habitations there were none nearer than the neighbouring villages, not even, as far as one could see, a woodcutter's hut. Many of the trees, however, were being cut down for the use of the army by the peasants and by the Army Service Corps, while between the forest and the village of Lucheux there was a fairly large A.S.C. camp.

One trotted back through the late cool of the evening, through the gathering dusk of leafy lanes and the twilight of the rolling plains, then through Doullens, where lights were beginning to twinkle and the populace were standing in groups at the corners of streets or at the doors of their houses, gossiping and smoking. One rode back to a late supper under the trees of the home wood,

for during the brilliant weather of those August days everybody slept, ate, and lived under the sky.

All that is over now—a memory. When the order came to move, as it must come, and did—and everybody knew what it meant—the day-dreams were over, the long solitary rides, the cool, quiet dusks and early mornings, the mellow beauty of the harvest time were at an end. Ahead there lay that other sadder harvest for which all had patiently waited as actors await a call.

But even then there was no foreboding, no grumbling or cursing, no futile regrets. Every man had had his fill of peace and sunshine—God had been good—and now every man felt fit to face whatever lay before him. So when the moment came, they just loaded their packs, shouldered their rifles, and tramped away, laughing and singing, along the dusty roads of France into the autumn haze.

They perished. Two weeks later they fought, bled, and died by the hundred, and few are left to tell of 'after Ypres.' Like a day that is done, like a picture that is painted, like a play played out to the end, the march south has fallen into a perspective which seems as though it had never been. Only there remains in the mind a clear-cut sequence of scenes, of incidents, of faces, which will never fade. The comrades of those days, most of them, the comrades of Ypres, Laventie, and Neuve Chapelle lie now a few feet beneath the soil of the Somme country. One feels grateful that they passed from peace on earth through but a few terrible days to that peace which passeth all understanding.

UNCONQUERED: AN EPISODE OF 1914.¹

BY MAUD DIVER.

CHAPTER XXV.

'So shall he read elder truths . . . grand truths, fearful truths. And so shall our commission be accomplished, which from God we had—to plague his heart until we had unfolded the capacities of his spirit.'—*Our Lady of Sorrows*.

MAVINS, like Wynchcombe Friars, was set upon a ridge; but here was no falling and rising sea of pine-tops splashed in dark foam against the sky. Lawns and shrubberies ended in a low brick wall matted with arabis and aubrietia. And beyond the wall lay Surrey, and again more Surrey, merging into Sussex: gentle undulations, interlacing ridges and, in the clear weather, the sweeping line of the Downs, mistily blue against the sky.

Sir Howard Meredith had entirely given over his beautiful place to those that—excepting prisoners—were perhaps the saddest aftermath of war, as conceived and waged by modern Germany: men broken in nerve and spirit; strong men, shaken by dreams and delusions, who dreaded the night and cried out in their sleep; men who sat alone and wept, quietly, hopelessly, because their manhood was gone from them, and with it, their power of self-control. One there was, a boy of two and twenty, crazed permanently, the doctors feared, because he had seen a lad of his own platoon crucified with indignity by German soldiers; and—he could not forget. That was the secret torment of so many who came out of the trenches seemingly unscathed:—they could not forget. Mark knew. It had been the chief of his own troubles in that backwater in France.

Yet now, for a time, under the deadening influence of nervous depression, he lived and moved among these tragic fellow-sufferers almost as though they were not. The first few weeks of isolation from all he loved drifted by like a timeless, colourless dream. He seldom opened a paper or troubled to read his letters. He wrote none, and hardly a trace remained of his keen interest in the war. He heard, with blank indifference, that the Russian 'steam-roller' was rolling to some purpose through Galicia, that the first

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Zeppelins had arrived in England and dropped bombs on the East Coast. Even the more personal news of Ralph's gallant death in action scarcely seemed to reach him.

It was the crazed boy and his story that gave him the first sharp twinge of pain—herald of returning life.

He heard it from Honor Lenox, Maurice's elder sister. She was at Mavins that winter, doing V.A.D. work, to which she had devoted herself unremittingly since the outbreak of war. As hospital orderly, she had been through the siege of Antwerp and the retreat upon Ostend. She had ministered to stunned and starving refugees, had earned conspicuous distinction in advance ambulance work, and had lately been decorated by the King.

She was a tall, angular girl, strikingly plain ; and Mark, in his present mood, found a certain refreshment in her bluntness and dry humour and strong, unbeautiful face. The normal Mark did not suffer plain women gladly. But at the moment it was Honor's chief asset that she was neither fascinating nor conspicuously a woman.

There was virtue also in her sane, soldierly attitude towards the war. She neither denounced it as devilish and senseless, nor harped morbidly on horrors. She had seen both sides of the shield. She knew—as he knew—that from the pains of hell spring the splendours of sacrifice and devotion ; that the true peace, which passes understanding, is not the special prerogative of the shirker and the pacifist ; that 'out there' even in the shambles 'Death rages but he does not reign.' There you have, perhaps, the main distinction between the soldiers who have resisted unto blood, and the ineffectives—willing and unwilling—obsessed by casualty lists, atrocities and shattered men. That spirit Mark chiefly associated with Bel : and he was the more thankful to find no trace of it in the daughter of Sir Eldred Lenox.

Not that she beguiled him with fairy tales. On the contrary, she recounted, purposely and in plain terms, many of her worst experiences ; probing him with stiletto pricks of pain sharper than his own, if so be that she might stab his spirit broad awake.

It was his unnatural indifference to Ralph's death that had prompted her to tell him in full the pitiful story of that crazed subaltern. The telling of it pained her horribly ; and the hearing of it hurt Mark as nothing had hurt him yet since that night when the sword of realisation pierced his soul.

Man-like, pain vented itself in anger. Why the dickens did

she talk about such beastliness? he demanded irritably: and she knew she had touched a vulnerable spot.

'I don't—as a rule,' she said, without apology. 'But, now and then, something goads me to remind myself that this *isn't* an ordinary war. It's a crusade against organised powers of evil. It makes vengeance almost a sacred duty. And we've got to realise things like that—however much we shrink from them—in order to crush out, as far as we can, the spirit that makes them possible.'

There was no fervour, no touch of the didactic in her quiet, rather flat voice. It spoke, with deep conviction, the very thoughts that had burned in his own brain after hearing the story of 'la petite Pauline.'

'That's so,' he agreed gruffly. 'Not much use, though, for the poor crooked-up devils who can't help any more.'

She looked back at him in her direct masculine fashion. A smile hovered in her eyes. 'There are crocks *and* crocks!' she said. 'And there are other ways besides fighting. Think them over. You'll find it as good as a tonic.'

He did think them over: and it was as good as a tonic. He reverted more than once to the subject of young Carmichael. Was there no hope? A shadow of hope, Honor told him. His mother—who came at intervals—was heart-broken.

That last bit of information took effect, as intended. Mark began to talk of his own mother. He also began to think about Ralph and Sheila. He wondered. He wanted to know.

Gradually, light was breaking through the fog that shrouded his spirit. Then came Sheila's letter about Ralph, that let in quite a painful flood of light and sensation.

'I wonder, have they told you,' she wrote, 'that my Ralph has had the honour of dying for his country? It was an honour he coveted with all his heart; and they say he came by it splendidly. I promised him long ago that, if this happened, I would not grieve nor wear mourning. But, oh Mark (if you are really waking up again), *you* will know, better than anyone but Mums, how blank everything feels some days when pride seems no prop at all and there is only the emptiness—the longing. And it's only to you two I can say a little of what I feel—on the bad days. In between, I can go quietly on and be grateful for my gift, such as it is, and pray that you may soon be home again to cheer the brave Mums in her great loneliness! I go to her whenever I can. Mr.

Macnair is ambulance-driving in France again. I do wish he would come back. And oh—a fresh trouble. My dear Mona is very ill with typhoid at Boulogne. I long to go to her. But I'm badly wanted here. Isn't your right arm well enough yet to manage a letter? Mums tells me she hasn't heard. Half a dozen lines, the merest scrawl even, would cheer her ever so. Do try.

'Yours always,

'SHEILA.'

That letter gave him a sudden blessed sense of enlargement; as if a window had been opened in his brain. It also pricked his awakening conscience; and he did try, with very fair success.

He also attempted a letter to Sheila: but the only thing he really wanted to tell her was the one thing that must never be told.

Having written the words 'My dear Sheila,' he sat there, pen in hand, cursing the fate that forbade him to add 'I love you—I love you—I love you.' Simply that. The sheer relief of it!

Suppose he did—what would her answer be?

Oh—coward and fool! Apart from every other disability, how could he account for Bel?

Sheila's mention of Mona set him thinking of Maurice. Queer that Miss Lenox had never mentioned him. Next time they were alone together he spoke of Mona's illness and asked after her brother.

Honor's face clouded a little.

'My poor Maurice,' she said, 'was not made for great days or terrible events. He has had a bitter bad time. It has broken him to pieces.'

'Bad luck—where is he, poor chap? There's good stuff in him if he isn't a fighter. I'd like . . . to hear more.'

So she told him more, glad of his increasing concern for others; though it went hard with her to speak freely of anything so near her heart. Maurice, it seemed, had returned to the Front after a fortnight in the hospital where Mona worked, and a week at home.

'In love with her—is he?' Mark asked.

'Yes. Very much so. That made a fresh jar with father. He hated the idea of Dr. Videlle's daughter marrying his son; though he wouldn't have Mrs. Lawrence know that for the world. It was a most awkward tangle, and it quite spoilt the poor boy's crumb of leave. Then he had an awful spell in the trenches.' She paused to steady her lips. 'I think—he was thankful when he got hit. But it's his right hand—badly damaged—'

'Oh Lord! Will he lose it?'

'I'm not sure. They still hope to save it—partially. He's back at Boulogne. The same hospital. His poor nerves worse than ever. Mother's out there too.'

'And Mona?'

Honor was silent a moment; then she said in a quiet, toneless voice: 'Mona . . . is dead. I only heard yesterday!'

'Good God!' Mark's voice was hushed also. He wanted to say more. But before he found the adequate word, she was speaking again in the same level tone.

'It is sometimes difficult, in these days, to go on believing that God is good. Maurice knew—she cared. He spoke to her a few days before she fell ill. And now—he's half crazed, mother says. They talk of sending him here. I hope they will. Professor Langton is working marvels.'

They did send him to Mavins, with the remains of his right hand in a sling. The bulk of it had been saved; and eventually, with practice, he would draw and paint again. But at present no word of comfort could reach his half-distracted brain. A troublesome case; not an obstinate one, the friendly Professor of Psychology told Honor; but it was unadvisable at present to let him see much of his sister or his friend.

Meanwhile the girl devoted herself to Sir Mark, and found no small comfort in his gradual progress towards a saner, happier mood of mind.

Keith—definitely back from France—came to see him oftener now, and they talked of Sheila. To Mark the mere sound of her name was like the music of running water in a barren land. It struck him that Keith seemed to be a good deal at Westover Court; and he fell to wondering about 'Mums.' Because he, Mark, had not been knocked out, did the queer fellow mean to keep silence for ever?

It also struck him as strange that his mother had never been to see him. At last he asked for her, and she came, on the wings of the first available express. Resolutely she had held to her hard resolve not to go near him till he needed her: and now she had her reward. He said little, but his hand clutched hers; and his eyes, that had a gleam of the old light in them, followed her wherever she moved.

'Come again soon,' he said at parting; and she came again soon. . . .

So February slipped by; and light increased without and within. And still across the Channel the interminable, underground war dragged on. And still Ministers temporised over conscription and enemy aliens and high explosives and other awkward trifles that involved the removal of kid gloves. And the voice of criticism and division—hushed in the inaugural days of 1914—was once more heard in the land.

And still, week after week, War—that is no respecter of Governments—exacted its inexorable toll of the young and the incomparably brave; and the fearful also.

Each dawn brought some new shock of grief to hundreds of hearts; brought also its golden grain of healing to those already stricken—

At Mavins, as the days grew longer and milder, healing came gradually both to Maurice and Mark.

Maurice's mercurial nature had responded more rapidly to both atmosphere and treatment than the doctors had dared to hope; and there came a day when Langton—who looked favourably upon Miss Lenox—declared that it rested with her to complete his cure.

Events justified him; and Mark found a new interest, not tinged with envy, in watching the two together. It set him thinking of Ailsa and wondering—would he eventually arrive at accepting Sheila in that relation, the only one now possible between them. Increasingly he longed to see her. But she did not come, and he would not ask.

In this fashion February drew to an end, and Dr. Norton came down to inspect his former patient. In his old guarded manner he expressed satisfaction with Mark's general condition. Improvement, slight yet unmistakable, had already begun; though how far it might ultimately go, not a doctor among them would venture to prophesy—yet. Mark's nerves, at all events, were obviously on the mend; and there was talk of going home.

That, unquestionably, was a move in the right direction; and yet—he felt half afraid. Manhood urged that he had been long enough on the shelf. It was high time to rouse himself and give his country such service as he could: to conquer a certain morbid dread of facing his own world—in a wheeled chair.

He did some hard and wholesome thinking on the subject, while Maurice claimed the chief part of Honor's attention; and he dis-

covered that here was the secret of his faint reluctance to go home, though well he knew that his mother was counting the days to his return.

He made that unheroic discovery on the last day of February, a day of fugitive appealing beauty.

With the help of the despised wheeled chair—that gave him a small measure of freedom—he had established himself in his special corner of the grounds, at the far end of the low wall looking southward across Surrey and Sussex to the sea. The February sun was warm as April. Close to him loomed a wide-spreading yew, centuries old. In the shadow of its blackness snowdrops gleamed; and on its uppermost branch sat a thrush, pouring out a torrent of song. Almost, in response to that brave music, Mark could feel the earth stirring in her sleep, even as his own benumbed spirit was stirring within him after the darkest winter he had ever known. A light breeze blew from the south. Stately masses of cloud drifted across the heavens; the Downs—grey-blue against a toneless horizon—seemed astonishingly near. . . .

Mark, brooding on them, recalled Meredith's phrase: 'The Downs have swiftness.' They set a man longing for a winged horse or for the seven-league boots. At first he had hardly been able to bear the sight of them. He was learning to bear it now; even as he was learning to accept cheerfully, almost gratefully, quite a number of things that in the beginning had seemed unendurable. There were black moods still, when the curses came; but these were increasingly off-set by moods of high-hearted resolve to fling into his art all the energy and passion of his stultified life: moods far truer to his essential self, likelier therefore to endure.

And on this February day of drifting cloud and snowdrops and a jubilant thrush, the more normal Mark held the field. He knew now, definitely, that his time at Mavins was nearing an end. Dr. Carstairs had spoken yesterday of a week or ten days. That fact alone served to stiffen his manlier resolves.

And there was also another fact: quite unlooked for, decidedly stimulating. Miss Lenox had discovered it in the *Times* that morning under the heading of Army Honours. It notified the award of the Distinguished Service Order to Lieutenant Sir Mark Stuart Forsyth; and, from the bone-dry record appended, Mark made the surprising discovery that on two occasions he had 'exhibited conspicuous coolness and courage.' Once, by his intrepid leading, he had carried a full trench against overwhelming odds: an

unpleasant business, he remembered it very well. Another time during a retreat, when one flank of the battalion had been left in the air, he had, it seemed, held on tenaciously to a critical position and saved the regiment from annihilation. That must have been on the terrible last day of his recollection, when he had himself been annihilated for his pains.

Baldly set down, it struck him as very ordinary average behaviour in the circumstances. Quite likely poor old Maurice had been just as sporting now and then. Only no one happened to notice. A war that rained shells, rained decorations—naturally enough. It was very gratifying, all the same, to have 'stopped one': to possess a lasting memento of his own brief, strenuous flash of effort.

And what did it amount to after all? For sixty days—whether in billets or trenches, or in the stress of actual fighting—he had lived at the full stretch of his being. He had quailed and suffered and exulted. He had seen with his eyes that, in nature and in human nature, beauty shines out undimmed, though all the devils of hell are leagued for its extinction. He had proved, in his own body and soul, that in war man values 'the power which it affords to life of rising above life.'

And now—this!

He glanced ruefully at the fur rug over his knees. Well, it was just a question whether those sixty days were not worth a life-time of limitation. But—the loss of Sheila! There was the rub. . . .

With a deliberate wrench he shifted his thoughts back to their starting-point—those three proud letters after his name. He must write to the Colonel—and to 'Mums.' No doubt she had been secretly watching that list for weeks! And now there would be no holding her. A wonder she had not wired already. She would need repressing badly; or goodness knew what manner of fool she would make of him. He had been a beast to her all these weeks. He would atone for it when he got home. Ten days seemed suddenly an intolerable time to wait. . . .

At this point he became aware of approaching footsteps and voices. The thrush became aware of them also and took flight.

They drew nearer; and their owners came into view: Keith, 'Mums'—Sheila, all three of them, with Maurice and his sister. Now he knew why there had been no telegram. Just like her. He might have guessed.

Closing his book with a snap, he waved a welcome, and his mother hurried forward.

'A surprise visit of congratulation, darling,' she explained superfluously. 'Well done!'

And she kissed him, unashamedly, before them all. There were moments when the Irish streak in her carried the day. There were also moments when even a son could not find it in his heart to be repressive.

Mark had enough ado to repress himself when Sheila stood before him, her soft, cool hand in his ; and Keith demanded gravely what the dickens he meant by giving his family such a shock ; and Maurice, the born talker, looked on enviously and said nothing.

The happy event, the sunshine and the smell of spring in the air went to their heads like wine. They talked nonsense once again with zeal and fluency ; and Mark himself was as foolish as any of them.

Then, quite casually, in the middle of it all, Keith slipped in his own surprise contribution, that had been kept a profound secret during its incubation. It consisted of a small motor car, specially designed, light and easy to handle, in which Mark—with Keith's help—could drive about his beloved country, and so regain a measure of the independent movement so dear to his heart. Keith himself was responsible for the thought, but the car was to be a combined gift from all three : the outward and visible sign of their joy in his return.

Mark—too overwhelmed for mere thanks—could only evince the liveliest interest in the 'little beauty' and her manifold perfections.

And through it all, his inner self was chiefly aware of Sheila's voice, too seldom heard, and Sheila's eyes—their twilight colour intensified by the grey-violet hat and gown that she wore in place of conventional mourning.

She sat on the low wall, a little apart from the group round his chair ; her sweet, serious face shadowed by the double loss of brother and friend.

He wanted her to himself so urgently that he wished the others at Jericho. Now and again he contrived an exchange of glances : a direct contact of spirit with spirit never achieved in all his passionate courtship of Bel. Then he would hold her gaze a minute—and reluctantly let her go. He had no business whatever to do this ; and he knew it. But to-day he felt like a schoolboy out of

bounds. He refused to look beyond the sunshine into the waiting dark—

Suddenly and surprisingly, life had righted itself in defiance of tragic limitations. The good minute would pass ; but the fact that it had come at all was of hopeful augury. And while it lasted, Mark could forget everything except that he had not lost his art ; and that Sheila, however unattainable, was part of the vital fabric of his life.

These thoughts visited him much later on that same evening, as he sat beside his fire reviewing the events of a day that marked a definite step towards the recovery of his spiritual balance ; of a normal, if tempered, thankfulness for all that still remained to him of joy in life.

Lately Maurice had taken to looking in at this time for a talk ; and he very soon appeared, with the inevitable cigarette and a rather doleful countenance.

For a while he sat smoking moodily, staring at the fire. Then, to Mark's surprise, he said in a constrained voice : ' I suppose Honor told you—about Mona.'

' Yes,' Mark did his best to convey his own dumb depth of fellow-feeling in that one word. Maurice let out a great sigh.

' Seeing Miss Melrose brought it all back again. She . . . Mona . . . understood. *She* didn't think me a hopeless rotter because I've been a bit broken up by this cursed, inhuman war.'

That tone towards the world's greatest Crusade jarred Mark always.

' Not a bit of use cursing the war, old chap,' he said kindly. ' Nearer the mark to curse the apostles of cheapness for cheapness' sake, who thwarted Joe Chamberlain, killed our economic independence, and delivered the Empire into the tentacles of the German octopus. But it's all done now ; and we've just got to put our backs into it and pull things through. You've done your level best, Maurice, and no one thinks you a hopeless rotter. *I* don't. Your sister doesn't. Your mother ? '

Maurice frowned. ' Hanged if I know what mother thinks. *She's* not the soft kind. And she hugely admires the genuine man of action ; which accounts for my splendid but rather formidable father. *He* thinks me the out-and-outest rotter that ever stepped. If it wasn't for Honor, God knows where I'd be at this moment. *She* ought to have been the soldier. I believe she'd give her eyes

to take my place; and here am I—wondering if they've lopped and chopped my precious hand enough to keep me out of those unholy trenches for good.'

Mark, scanning his friend's rueful profile, decided that mere sympathy was not the tonic for his complaint.

'You can't shoot without your trigger finger,' he remarked in practical tones. 'But that's no matter, now they've given you a commission.'

Maurice grimaced.

'You don't want to go back—in any capacity, eh?' Mark asked casually.

'No. I'm damned if I do. Honestly, d'you suppose any man *does*, who has a grain of sensibility in his composition?'

Mark was silent a moment, considering.

'I don't know. Hard to say. In either case, they wouldn't shout it from the housetops. Personally, I was keen to get back. Sheer perversity, perhaps; but it's true. God knows, killing and getting killed, the way it's done *now*, is a pretty gruesome business. But exterminating Germans is a service to the whole civilised world, not to mention being a man's first duty to his country. And, oh Lord, it's big. It's *real*—overpoweringly real.' He paused and set his teeth hard. 'I simply hate being out of it all—shelved. Wish to God I was in your case. And you can't have the face to pretend you'd sooner be—as I am.'

Maurice was lighting a fresh cigarette.

'Honour bright,' he said, 'I was thinking out there, this afternoon, what a lucky devil you were!'

Mark flashed round on him. 'Lucky—*me*?'

'Yes: as things go these days. You're through with the worst of it. You've done jolly well. Your people think no end of you, and you'll probably do thundering big things once you get started again. As for me—'

'As for *you*,'—Mark's friendly tone had a touch of sternness, 'you're a graceless ingrate. Your hand's been saved. You've everything before you and your spurs still to win. Strikes me, the sooner I get on with your conversion all round the better!'

But later, when Maurice had gone, those astonishing words 'lucky devil' returned and walked to and fro in his brain and flashed light into dark corners, where for weeks no light had been. His own tragedy had seemed to him a thing so absolute that he had

forgotten, in his misery, the relative nature of all sensation ; and he admitted now that 'as these times go' a worse fate might have befallen him. On the wings of imagination, he had explored the long unchanging road from twenty-seven to seventy—and had found it too hard to travel. And again he had forgotten that the actual journey must be taken day by day, mile by mile ; that, imperceptibly, the face of that road would change in response to his own unconquered spirit and the healing influence of time.

Life, that is more inexorable than death, cannot away with that crowning mercy. The veiled hours come to us single file. Were it not so, which of us would find courage to face them at all ? In war, and in the anguish of blows that shatter faith and courage, it is perhaps this crowning mercy that withholds tortured humanity from running headlong down a steep place into the sea——

Mark sat late that night over the red embers of his fire, smoking . . . pondering . . .

CHAPTER XXVI.

'Even the wise man's feet are turned astray by tumult of the soul.'—PINDAR.

On a certain afternoon of March, Lady Forsyth sat in a third-class carriage of a certain casual train that loafed along the line, these disorganised days, between Waterloo and Westover. She religiously travelled third now, and as religiously put the difference into her war-purse for prisoners. Mark was not told, lest he prove unmanageable : and Keith's objections had been overruled with a high hand.

This particular train was the slowest in the day. Helen never patronised it except from force of circumstances ; and she irreverently christened it 'the British Government'—not altogether without provocation.

Hers was not the only heart, in those anxious times, that cried out for a Triumvirate to organise all the resources of a great and willing Empire for the salvation of the world. But the cry went up in vain. And still politicians talked and soldiers prayed for the Great Offensive, and the war of trenches and sectors went lumbering on. . . .

Then, suddenly, the West had leaped to life. 'Victory at last !' sang the posters and the head-lines. And the journalists vied with each other in chronicling Homeric feats. . . .

That was a week ago. And now it appeared there had been some mistake about this 'great and glorious victory.' One indisputable fact stood out—the casualty lists. It began to look as if, after all, *they* were likely to prove the biggest thing about it. Helen Forsyth had heard talk in London that she tried to dismiss as mere pessimism, but her instinct told her it was probably true.

The train groaned and jolted to a standstill:—Little Franton. Another hour to Westover. Lady Forsyth leaned back and closed her eyes. She had had two strenuous days in town. She was very tired and longing to get home—to Mark. It was still a strange and wonderful fact that home should also mean Mark. He was her private reason for courting the present infliction. She had failed to catch an earlier express and refused to wait for a later one. It was sufficiently distracting being called away for a night so soon after his return.

The first few days of their frank joy in each other had been flawless. But the necessary intrusion of the larger world marked the beginning of trouble. It was plain that he would not easily overcome a certain sensitive shrinking from outside people; though in his more normal moods he would spurn this weakness and override it ruthlessly.

A few days ago, with Keith's diplomatic help, Lady Forsyth had persuaded him to summon an informal afternoon gathering—the gamekeeper, the manager of their handicrafts colony, his better-class tenants and their wives. And he had been at his best: friendly, sympathetic, full of humorous talk. She had only discovered the effort it cost him by the reaction that followed, and had reproached herself not a little for having pressed the point.

Keith, however, insisted rightly that the sooner Mark did violence to his natural shrinking the sooner he would conquer it: and conquer it he must. But his recurrent headaches troubled her. She had made a point of seeing Dr. Norton while in town. Her faith in him was implicit, and his encouraging view of things had comforted her considerably.

'Give him plenty of fresh air. A little gentle massage. And avoid needless friction over trifles.' That had been the great man's final injunction, heartily endorsed by Helen.

Privately she had feared that the massage part of it might produce friction straight away; and at lunch, in Mrs. Laurence's war-work flat (Colonel Laurence was serving in France), that fear

had been confirmed. Honor Lenox and Sheila, who had struck up a friendship, were lunching there too ; and Honor bore witness that, when massage was prescribed at Mavins, Mark had proved intractable.

'I believe if I could have done it myself,' she added, 'I might have persuaded him. But nothing would induce him to let "a strange woman maul his head"! And they thought it unadvisable to press the point. But now—why not Sheila? The very person.'

Naturally that had been Helen's first thought, and Sheila's also. But the older woman—because of her secret hope—had felt a scrupulous hesitancy about volunteering the suggestion ; and the girl had her own private qualms to overcome. Both were proportionately grateful for Honor's blunt directness and commonsense, professional point of view. She saw only a man in need of healing and the one acceptable healer happily on the spot : and on the whole, Lady Forsyth felt justified in taking the same view. It had finally been decided that she should sound Mark on the subject and let Sheila know the result.

After all, his complete recovery was a matter of the first importance. She had no sure knowledge of Sheila's heart ; and, as regards her own son, she was altogether in the dark. Since that day at the nursing home, he had never mentioned Bel : and she devoutly hoped he never gave a thought to that devastating young woman.

His uncertain moods put a severer strain upon her than she would admit, even to herself. If anyone could spirit them away permanently it would be Sheila : and . . . supposing things went further still—well, why not ? The question had a touch of defiance, as though some unseen mentor had ventured a rebuke. Mentor or no, she could not, or would not see any cause or just impediment. For once in a way she, who set such store by truth in the inward parts, was not altogether honest with herself : a pardonable lapse, in the circumstances.

Could Mark once be made to realise that a woman loved him enough to marry him, disabled as he was, all his uncertain moods and irritations would vanish into air. In time, she felt convinced, this cruel paralysis would loosen its hold on him ; and *if* Sheila cared sufficiently to take all risks, whose business was it to come between them. . . ?

But as usual she was racing ahead miles too fast. Possibly

neither of them cared—in that way. Probably Mark would snub the massage idea. More than probably he would, now, refuse to marry Sheila, even if he loved her to distraction. She decided to make the suggestion as from herself. The other might seem like forcing his hand. He must feel free to refuse.

At this point her attention was distracted from personal worries by women's voices opposite. One of them she recognised: Mrs. Beck, proprietor of the Post Office and sweet-shop at Wynchmere. It was the War of course: and Helen, keeping her eyes shut, dismissed her own anxieties and listened.

Said the voice that was not Mrs. Beck's: 'Your son, 'as 'e gone back yet to them trenches?'

'No. 'E's not near fit: never *was*,' came Mrs. Beck's emphatic tones. 'But 'e'll be goin' sure 'nough, before long.'

'Frettin' to get back, is he? My word, it's no pantomime. You do 'ear some tell they want to go back. An' it makes yer wonder——'

'Want to go back? O' course they don't: not my boy, nor any of 'em.' Mrs. Beck's voice was angry now as well as emphatic. 'Oo could? Them that talks that way says it to hearten their women-folks. They knows it's *djuty*. So they shuts their teeth an' goes. But they *says nothing*—not they. There was jest one o' mine did—once. Pore Alf! 'E come clean through Monsse, and all them 'orrors, without a scratch. An'... when 'e was leavin' 'ome again, I says to 'im, I says: "You'll come back for sure. You've a charmed life." But 'e shook 'is head. "Their turn last time. Mine next," 'e said, jokin'-like. 'E knew 'e'd be took—an' 'e woz.'

Followed a sympathetic silence from the mere sister; and Helen—who remembered Alf and all the circumstances—thought shame of herself for allowing Mark's moods to blur the supreme fact that she had him safe—permanently safe—from jagged bayonets, explosive bullets, and all the scientific barbarities that still hurt her soul.

Her one remaining treasure had not been 'took.' It was enough.

The leisurely train was nearing home now. She sat up and greeted Mrs. Beck; and they talked Neuve Chapelle till the name-board said 'Westover' at last.

And there was Keith on the platform and Mark awaiting her in the car, brown and vigorous looking: quite himself again in

motor coat and cap. And she felt more than ever ashamed of fitful repinings.

Mark evinced his joy at her return by keeping a hand on her knee under the fur rug and ragging her mercilessly all the way home. At dinner he was quieter, with the brooding look in his eyes that Helen had learnt to dread. Afterwards Keith settled them in the drawing-room, and went off to the library leaving them together.

He had now definitely given up his ambulance work on the other side and divided his time between local recruiting, a committee for the welfare of prisoners, and a deeply thought-out treatise on the psychological effects of war. Underlying all these obvious activities, was the cherished conviction that Helen had need of him; more especially in these first difficult days. . . . He had never said another word about her to Mark; nor had he found the opportune moment for speaking to her himself. He was hyper-fastidious in respect of that critical moment. Moreover, when a lover—and that lover a Scot—has kept silence for fifteen years, it is almost easier to go on keeping silence than to speak: and Keith Macnair was essentially of those who know how to wait.

The two he had left in the drawing-room fell silent after a little desultory talk. Helen could think of nothing but Sheila. Mark's reviving soul was shadowed by ominous signs of failure at Neuve Chapelle. Names of officers in his own battalion had been painfully prominent in the Roll of Honour: men he had lived with, fought with, and loved. He was girding at his own inability to go out and replace one of them; picturing the welcome they would give him:—MacKail, Fordyce, the Colonel. *His* name was not in the list, thank God!

It all hurt him so acutely that he could not manage to talk of it even to his mother: so he fell back on silence.

His quietness was deceptive: his frown might merely mean headache. Helen could not know that the devil within was making peculiarly malignant remarks to him just then: and her very anxiety to choose the right moment made her almost certain to stumble on the wrong one.

'I saw Dr. Norton to-day,' she remarked casually. 'He wanted to hear about you—and the headaches. He swears by two simple remedies: plenty of fresh air—and massage. The nerves of the head and neck. And afterwards, at the flat, Honor suggested Sheila——'

Mark's frown deepened unpromisingly.

'My dear mother, *I'm* all right. For God's sake, don't fuss.'

'Darling, I'm not fussing. Dr. Norton prescribed it. And Sheila did wonders for me—after Boulogne.'

'I can well believe it. But I won't have her bothered on my account. She's overworked as it is.'

'But, Mark, she delights in it,' Helen persisted fatally. 'And for you, of all people—'

'Yes—for *me* of all people!' Mark flung out with a sudden uncontrollable bitterness that effectually silenced her. Startled by his vehemence, she could only stand gazing at him, pain and bewilderment in her eyes. But his own pain blinded him to hers, and he sharply turned away his head.

'Oh—*don't* look at me like that,' he muttered. 'You make too much of things. All those poor chaps killed and wounded out there, and you're worrying over my twopenny headaches. *Let* Sheila come—if she's willing, and if it'll make you happy.'

His mother compressed her lips. 'Nothing will make me happy, Mark,' she said quietly, 'till I see you more nearly your old self again.'

'Well, I'll never be my old self again—*never*—if I live to be eighty: which God forbid!'

The moment the words were out he realised their cruelty. He felt as if he had struck her; and impulsively he put out his hand.

But she had turned from him swiftly to hide her tears—and she was gone.

Helpless to follow her, he sat there alone with his bitterness and his shame and his desperate longing for Sheila, that had instinctively prompted him to veto his mother's tempting plan. . . .

Presently the door opened and Keith came in. He looked grave, almost stern.

'What have you been saying to upset Helen?' he asked bluntly. 'Couldn't you see she was tired out?'

Beneath the reproof Mark detected the unconscious, possessive note of the lover and responded to it straightway, incurable lover that he was. His faint annoyance at being taken to task evaporated.

'Where is she? What's she doing?' he asked, patently contrite, yet vouchsafing no explanation.

'In the library. She *thinks* she's writing letters.'

'Did she say anything?'

'Is it likely? What did you say? That's the point.'

Mark frowned. 'Nothing would induce me to repeat it. It was only—she got worrying over my confounded head. Massage and that sort of rot. She's keen for Sheila to come and try her hand on me.'

'Well—what's wrong with Sheila?'

'There's nothing wrong with Sheila,' Mark answered; and this time the lover's note was in his own voice. 'But—at the moment, everything was wrong with me. And, like a coward, I let fly at Mums.'

Keith's eyes lightened strangely. 'Well, no matter how bad things are with you—and I don't belittle them—I can't have you hurting her like that. She's suffered more this winter than you, or any of us, will ever know. Sheila's been no less than an angel of consolation; and if Helen wants her here, let her come. She would probably do you a deal of good. And anyway she'd be a healing influence in the house, which is precisely what you're both needing just now. Mark, old chap, I'm not down on you. But—you understand?'

'Yes. I understand.'

A pause. Mark felt suddenly tempted, by Keith's change of tone, to break through his own reserve. It would be a vast relief to tell Keith about Sheila and discover his unbiassed view of things. But Bel, though no longer loved, still left her trail over his life. Three months ago she was presumably all the world to him; and now—to make parade of his love for Sheila would seem but a poor compliment: an insult, almost. Hard to make another understand that the two emotions had as little in common as the girls themselves. Still harder to explain that strange spiritual awakening in France. Obviously, the Fates had decreed that she should come. Let her come, then—and chance the result. They could have devised no finer test for his power of self-mastery.

Keith, who shrewdly suspected the truth, adjusted a blazing log with his foot and said nothing.

'I say, go and tell Mums I want her,' Mark said suddenly; and Keith, with a nod of approval, went back to the library.

Mark had time to grow impatient before she reappeared. And when she did come, he was tongue-tied. He could only hold out his arms——

CHAPTER XXVII.

'Thro' such souls alone,
God, stooping, shows sufficient of His light
For us, i' the dark, to rise by.'

BROWNING.

So Sheila came again to Wynchcombe Friars—the real Wynchcombe Friars; no longer an empty shrine lit by twin lamps of memory and hope. How gladly, how thankfully, she answered that summons no one guessed, Mark least of all; and that fact alone made it possible to come. Neither did she herself guess that Keith knew. Her secret was as safe with him as in a tomb; and he it was who, three days later, drove out to fetch her in Mark's two-seater electric car, in which he was just beginning to reconnoitre his property and look up his tenants as of old.

Mark and his mother were in the studio when sounds of arrival whisked Helen to her feet. Her natural instinct was to run downstairs and greet them: but she was learning to restrain many such impulses that Mark might not too acutely feel his minor disabilities.

Presently the door opened and Sheila appeared, glowing from her drive, violet-gowned as on the day he had seen her last: a bunch of violets in her squirrel cap, and distinctly dewy violets in her eyes. The long low room with its restful blue tones and dark oak panelling was flooded with March sunlight, fragrant with the scent of hyacinths that stood about in bowls; and to Mark, the small gallant figure of his first and last allegiance seemed in tune with it all, visibly and vitally, as Bel had never been.

Sheila, for her part, would have summed up her own mixed emotions in the one word 'home': the home of her spirit and her heart.

After a swift survey of the room, her eyes rested, smiling, on Mark in his wheeled chair by the window.

'The quartette complete again, at last, under one roof!' she said, a thrill in her low voice. Then the underlying tragedy caught at her heart and she took refuge in her Viking. '*He* must be glad to have you back again. Hasn't he told you so?'

'Yes—lately he has,' Mark answered, looking at her, not at the Viking, whom it pleased them to regard as a member of the family. 'But the gladdest of all was Bobs, here. No blooming reticence about him!'

'The darling!' And crouching down, Sheila stroked the chestnut head.

The devoted creature lay close pressed against his master's legs, using Mark's feet for a chin-rest: an endearing form of caress. But Mark could not feel it any more. He sometimes wondered—did the others realise? He hoped they did not.

'I thought the poor little chap would go crazy, the first day,' he said. 'Kept flinging himself against me; tearing up and down the room; asking me, plain as speech, to get up and play the fool with him. Now—he understands and he's just glued to my chair. Won't even go for a walk with Keith.'

Sheila's eyes were so dewy by this time that she had to make the most of Bobs, who wanted to go to sleep again and found her attentions rather superfluous. He was a man's dog, first and last.

Lunch, at the far end of the long room, was a brief and cheerful meal: Keith, for a wonder, being the principal talker. He had gleaned some inside information of the dispositions of Neuve Chapelle; and he proceeded to demonstrate them, for Mark's benefit, with the toast rack, the muffineers, the cake and several apples, blandly ignoring murmurs from Helen about 'the geography of the table.'

The meal ended, he retired to the library and his treatise; and Helen went down to interview a refugee dressmaker: a forlorn and pathetic creature in whom she took a very special interest.

'I'll be back soon, my lambs,' she said as she went.

There was a perceptible moment of embarrassment; but Sheila swiftly conquered her shyness.

'I don't see anything new here yet,' she remarked, glancing round his sanctuary. 'And you know I'm expecting—great things!'

Mark shook his head. 'I've not touched a bit of clay or plasticine since I got back. But, in that folio, there's a rough crayon of a charging Highlander on a bit of brown board, if you'd care to make his acquaintance.'

No need to answer that. She had him out instantly and propped him on an antique table against the wall. Rough he certainly was, but of a vigour and vitality that went far to justify her expectation of great things. No artist by temperament, like Bel, Sheila could neither appraise nor criticise technically; but she had an unerring eye for motive, for the underlying spirit of art in all its manifestations. Certain sketches she had seen at Mavins, and this barbaric figure that sprang yelling from the parapet—

bayonet fixed, head back, kilt flying—told her that Mark's idealism had gained rather than lost by contact with the uglier, more staggering aspects of life and death. And there can be no sharper test of its quality. Cruel things, tragic things, seen and suffered, had drawn his Muse closer to earth—had imparted a certain ruthlessness both to his manner and matter; but exultingly she knew that he belonged, and would always unfailingly belong, to the great company for whom there is always a window that looks to the sky.

'I saw him—just like that,' Mark explained to her silence. 'Five minutes afterwards a shell came our way—' An expressive gesture filled the hiatus. 'And somehow he stuck in my brain.'

'Yes—he would,' she said, still dwelling upon him. 'Why not make a small statue of him? He is simply—Scotland for ever!'

Mark's eyes were on her face and her low tone thrilled through him.

'He shall be yours—if I ever get him into clay. But at present all that side of things seems dead.'

'Not dead—but sleeping,' she said, in her softest voice. 'It will come back—bigger and more splendidly alive—when you've struck root again in this dear deserted place.'

He sighed. 'Hope you're right. I'll need it more than ever I did, once I'm . . . renewed mentally. It isn't an altogether painless process. And I'm no stoic—'

'I expect Mums would tell a different tale,' she put in gently.

'Mums would glorify me—from sheer habit! Yet it's she who gets the full benefit of my lapses from stoicism—bless her. . . .'

At this point she reappeared with her knitting and her *National Review*; and they proceeded to arrange Mark's invalid table, with a cushion for his arms. 'There,' said his mother, shaking it up. 'Bow your head upon your folded arms and try not to feel heart-broken!'

'Try not to feel a fool would be more like it,' he grumbled ungratefully. As a matter of fact he found no difficulty in obeying her last injunction. But Bobs, who had been taking stock of these mysterious doings, had his own private opinion on the subject. No self-respecting dog could submit to see his master so humiliated. The call for championship was obvious. With little snarling sounds, he sprang up and snapped at Sheila's hands; half playful, half vicious, and wholly determined to rescue his helpless owner, till Mark flung up his head and laughed. 'Officious little beggar! Turn him out, please, Mums.' He glanced at Sheila. 'I won't

have *you* bullied. He tried to eat Macgregor and Keith first time he saw them handle me.'

'Macgregor—your Sergeant?'

'Yes. Knocked out too, poor chap! Lost his foot, after all. But he's a sturdy fellow, so I secured him for my bodyguard, and he was no end pleased.—Now then. Go ahead. It's not half bad!'

In his heart he found it little short of magic. But that sort of thing could not be said. Since his mother's concern was entirely for himself, his own concern must be entirely for Sheila. His will, too long in abeyance, must stand between him and the temptation to discover, by imperceptible means, whether his defection had killed outright the shy response he was just beginning to discern when Bel appeared on the scene. By some means he must contrive to keep the lover's note out of their intercourse. He was glad at least that a deeper expression of brotherly tenderness had crept into his letters from France. It would make things a trifle easier now.

This renewal of intimacy would, he perceived, be no light ordeal; so closely interwoven were the strands of joy and pain. But it was the price of her sweet companionship; and he would pay it willingly, just so long as it involved no risk for her.

For nearly an hour he surrendered himself to the healing influence of her spirit and her touch, till definite thought was stilled and peace flowed through him, as in the days when Sœur Colette had kneeled and prayed beside his bed. . . .

Then it was over and he was bidden to lie quiet till tea-time, while his mother and Sheila strolled on the terrace in the sun.

Keith came in for tea; and, later on, Dr. Warburton appeared. The illusion of old times was strong upon them all. Except for war-talk and Mark's wheeled chair, it was almost as if their summer and winter of tragic memory had never been. Only the fact that Sheila must leave them broke the spell. . . .

After that, she came again and again, and the effect on Mark's temper and spirits was obvious to all. She was not a healing influence, merely, but a source of inspiration; an incentive to renewed effort, to a more purposeful grip on the far from futile activities that still remained to him.

Inevitably he found himself contrasting the high felicity of this girl's companionship with that other who had led him hopelessly astray from the path of true happiness. On the one hand a spell,

a desire, a troubled unsatisfying charm: on the other, a real woman's heart—gracious, consoling, understanding—that rang true to every testing touch, and would, he felt convinced, could he test her to the uttermost. If, at times, Sheila seemed narrow where Bel was diffused, she had the higher merit of being deep where Bel was shallow. While there was scarcely a surface in life or art that Bel had not skimmed, she had penetrated nowhere. Sheila—ignorant of much that the modern girl deems essential to her equipment for life—was profoundly versed in the eternal lore of the heart. Bel could never let a man forget he was primarily a man, and she primarily a woman: whereas, some finer quality in Sheila enabled Mark to rest content—almost—with the enchantment of her voice, her eyes, and the fellowship of her spirit. Yet—there were moments when he wondered how much longer he could keep it up.

And Sheila herself, though he did not guess it, was his best safeguard. She had come, simply and gladly, without afterthought, convinced that she could heal his hurt spirit, though his body was beyond earthly help. And gradually, unconsciously, she imparted something of her exalted mood to Mark. A growing conviction that this blessed state of things involved no danger to her gave him fresh courage to control his own emotion lest he lose the best he had any right to ask of her now.

So, for a while, things went well at Wynchcombe Friars; and for Lady Forsyth those last two weeks of March were the happiest, the most hopeful, she had known since Mark's return from France.

He had reverted to his old keen interest in the management of his property; and began to enjoy driving with Russell through his woods and farm-lands, and supervising his handicrafts colony, chiefly given over to French and Flemish refugees. Since now no son of his would ever reign at Wynchcombe Friars, he was the more zealous to do his utmost—while time and opportunity were given him—for the people and the land he loved. In this way he grew to be aware that his people now regarded him with a new and peculiar devotion, often touchingly exhibited, inexpressive creatures though they were by heritage and habit. He read voraciously and played chess with his mother; though in their case it was apt to become a prolonged argument rather than a game. He also started a bust of Keith, who quarrelled with his undiscerning choice of a subject and in secret was mightily pleased at the compliment.

Mark did not fail to note his mother's eager interest in this

new venture : or the pains she was at not to let it be suspected. It set him wondering what on earth the dear good fellow was up to—he that was free to go in and win the woman of his heart.

March departed lamblike ; and April came in with primroses and violets and dappled skies—with coral buds on the wild almond at the end of the terrace, and the gleam of young leaves on black boughs.

April was Mark's own month, and for him there was none like it in all the year. He too felt the leap of new life and hope within him ; and Sheila began to talk of getting leave for her promised visit to Wynchcombe Friars.

But, before her dream came true, that stir of new life, within and without, precipitated a crisis—almost inevitable between unavowed lovers, using the language of friendship and thinking the thoughts of love. It came precisely when and precisely because increasing confidence and intimacy had thrown them a little off their guard.

Upon the afternoon of Sheila's seventh visit they were left practically alone. Keith had driven Lady Forsyth over to Bramleigh Beeches to meet a distinguished Indian poetess, who had expressed admiration of Helen's small volume of French and Belgian war poems. These she had translated during the winter to keep her mind from brooding on Mark and to raise extra money for their refugees. Helen was eager to meet the little lady who had written so charmingly about her work ; and they left early that Keith might be back in time to drive Sheila home.

Mark's elation should have warned him that there was peculiar need for caution and control. But the wine of spring sparkled in his veins. The air was full of love-songs and *Te Deums*. Daffodil buds were breaking and the first butterflies were out. All the morning he had been scouring the country with Keith in the little car that was now the joy of his life : and an afternoon alone with Sheila fittingly crowned his content.

When massage was over he voted for tea at the south-west corner of the terrace where they would secure the last of the sun.

'A Japanese tea-party,' said Sheila, 'to worship the almond blossom !'

Mark privately added another object of worship no less symbolic of spring. For Sheila, happy in her devotion and in her power of healing, was emerging from the shadow of her double loss,

and shyly watching, at last, the dawn of her secret hope. Her eyes and skin were clearer, her cheeks less pale, her beauty and her spirit seemed visibly to blossom with the blossoming year. Her delight in the day and the occasion was no less than Mark's, but it was of a stiller quality.

They carried him down to the terrace, chair and all; and there, established in the sunny corner, watched over by the almond tree, she made tea for him and told stories of her other patients, whom she was neglecting a little these days.

More by instinct than design, they kept their talk in a lighter vein than usual; and Bobs, as gay as either of them, proved very serviceable in this respect.

Suddenly there flashed on Mark's memory that other picnic on the shore of Loch Etive: the love-making, the conscious coquetry; the first intimation of underlying rocks that would have wrecked their ship of marriage. Summarily he dismissed the intrusive reminder, that made him angry with himself, angrier still with Bel and her shallow witchery. Yet the indelible shadow of what had been lay right across his path. Painfully he was learning that 'the whole life is mixed; the mocking Past will stay.'

But this afternoon he would have none of it——

Hester had come out to remove the tea-things, and she brought a letter for Mark from Colonel Munro. When he looked up from reading it, Sheila sat lost in thought, one elbow on the empty tea-table, looking away across the valley, where a gap in the pine-woods revealed a glimpse of blue distance clear against the evening sky.

For a space he watched her, till he dared watch no longer. Then: 'Mouse,' he said very quietly, 'what are you brooding on so deeply?'

And she answered him, as quietly, in one word: 'Ralph.'

Her tone in speaking of that very ordinary, very brave and beloved brother gave Mark always a sense of standing on sacred ground. He said nothing; and after a pause she sighed and sat upright in her low straight-backed chair, resting her arms on the table, her hands loosely clasped.

'A day like this is double-edged, isn't it? It seems to stir all the deeps—joy and pain. He was such a dear, simple thing. So close to earth, loving it all so. And yet—the other was what he wished. Just when you spoke I was thinking of that wonderful Roumanian ballad, the dead soldier who was content

—the last lines—you know, when he asks the passers-by are they remembering him?

“Not so, my hero,” the lovers said,

“We are those who remember not.

For the Spring has come and the Earth has smiled
And the dead must be forgot.”

And the soldier spake from the deep dark grave—

“I am content!”

At the last, her voice shook so that there was a moment of silence before she added: ‘I believe that’s what most of them would say—our “noble army of martyrs”—if only we could hear.’

‘Yes: most of them,’ Mark answered with quiet conviction. ‘And on the whole, I’m not sure . . . they haven’t the best of it.’

She turned quickly and met his direct gaze. ‘You mustn’t say that.’

‘I don’t—to the others. But I feel it . . . pretty acutely . . . sometimes.’

‘Not so often—now.’

It was a statement rather than a question.

‘Not nearly so often. That’s your doing.’

Her deep blush so startled him that he promptly took refuge in generalities:—the effect of the war on character, national and individual: which tendency would prevail on the whole, the spiritual exaltation of a high purpose and tragedy nobly borne, or demoralisation from sheer horror and strain? Maurice Lenox, for instance, how would he and his type eventually emerge from the war? And even where there had been a genuine uplift, would it last? Or would the pendulum swing back farther than ever, if the struggle dragged endlessly, sullenly on?

Sheila admitted reluctantly that the pendulum had to be reckoned with. She was thinking of Seldon and Bel: and some hidden channel of communion conveyed her thought to Mark. He had heard of Seldon from Ralph at Inverraig; and again, lately, from his mother. But he had no idea how far things had gone between them, and he very much wanted to know. He had no business whatever to be jealous of the man; but he was fiercely jealous, none the less.

‘How about that particular friend of yours, Seldon?’ he asked casually. ‘Mums told me you had him here. Quite regenerate. All your achievement.—What d’you think? Will it last?’

She started and looked up. 'How odd you should speak of him. He was in my mind.'

'Why was he in your mind?'

Jealousy flashed out in spite of him: and she smiled.

'Isn't he allowed to be?'

'I'm not sure. Depends how he's going to behave himself!' The chaffing tone was deliberately assumed. 'As a patient—'

'Oh, he's not my patient any more,' she put in quickly. 'But I'm bothered about him all the same.'

'Why? Isn't it going to last?'

'He'll go out again. At least, I believe he will,' she answered evasively. 'Motor transport, he says. He can't do despatch-riding any more.'

'Still writes to you, does he?'

'Not very often—now.' She paused, longing to tell him everything: yet doubtful, still, whether any shred of feeling remained for Bel.

'And . . . he doesn't want to marry you?' Mark asked irrelevantly. He simply had to know.

'He did. That was the beginning of it.'

'Of what?—The drink? Because you wouldn't have him?'

'Mark—that's an insult!' But it was useless pretending to be angry. The discovery that he could be jealous, even half in joke, sent her spirits up with a run. 'Someone else was responsible for that, thank goodness! And, unluckily, he's come across her again. I'm not at all happy about it; and I don't think he is either.'

'Wrong sort, is she?'

'M—yes. I don't believe she wants him. Yet—she's holding him in spite of himself.'

'Poor devil!' Mark was quite ready now to extend the hand of sympathy. 'I know—all about that.' He spoke slowly and with emphasis. He had decided, on the spur of the moment, to break through his misleading silence about Bel: to explain frankly the process and the completeness of his disenchantment. She must know. She had the right to know: she, whom he had so cavalierly deserted, after their names had been coupled by relatives and friends. Though power to make reparation was denied him, he felt imperatively that she must know.

So, after a pause, he went on, with the same slow emphasis: 'You see—perhaps you *did* see—Miss Alison was that sort.'

The formal name, so casually spoken, sounded very strange on

his lips; and her heart, that was now in a troublesome state of commotion, rejoiced to hear it. 'Yes: I did see—afterwards,' she said in her quietest voice. 'Not at first.'

'Nor did I—at first. In fact, not clearly, till I got out to France. Machine-guns and high explosives play havoc with more than the landscape and the human envelope. They smash up unrealities and readjust all the values. Oh, yes, out there one saw things clear—horrid clear. Her letters too . . .' he paused. 'And all those weeks, when . . . I was dead; when I seemed to have no real link with anything, anyone, but that devoted little Nun. Her saintliness, her simplicity . . . made things clearer than ever. I saw——' He paused, looking down into the heart of the wood; tempted beyond measure to defy Fate and iron decrees and tell her *all* he had seen in those strange days, when his lips were closed and his eyes were dazzlingly opened to the truth. The one thing he did not see at that moment, fortunately perhaps, was Sheila's face, bright with the dawn of realisation, of an almost incredible hope. 'I saw,' he repeated in a low, impersonal tone, as if talking to himself, 'how rootless our whole relation was and always had been. She never reached the depths. Didn't want to. She had no earthly use for them. Her effect on me was an artificial stimulus all along. Mind, I'm not excusing myself. It's no credit to me that she could and did take such a hold. And I came very near marrying her before I went out. Makes me shiver to think of it: for her sake as much as my own. Dangerous things, these war marriages. But then, when I came back, there she was—irresistible as ever. But the something in me that couldn't resist her had been burnt away—out there. Then they told me I was a permanent crock. . . . No choice—after that. Marrying days were over.' A pause. 'Perhaps, after all, it's worth being smashed up, like this, to save one's soul alive. There—now you know. I've been wanting to tell you . . . all that this long while.'

'And I've been badly . . . wanting to know,' she admitted very softly; but his quick ear caught a new vibration in her voice. Startled out of his passing relief, he turned swiftly and was confronted by a transfigured Sheila; gifts in her eyes; the colour rising in her cheeks. For her there was no iron decree. Heart and soul she was ready. And Mark, for one measureless moment, sat there tongue-tied, realising what he had done, realising still more acutely what he dared not do. Then, with a supreme effort he forced himself to look away from her.

'I was *right* when I said . . . just now . . . the dead have the best of it,' he muttered in a tone of concentrated bitterness.

Sheila sat silent, motionless. It was as if with one hand he had lifted her to heaven and with the other had flung her back into the dust. Her eyes were blinded so that she could not see the pain in his face: and suddenly her ears caught the purr of the motor coming down the drive.

'Ah—there they are!' It was Mark who spoke.

She heard the note of relief in his voice and it cut her to the heart.

Without a word she rose and went to meet them.

(To be concluded.)

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